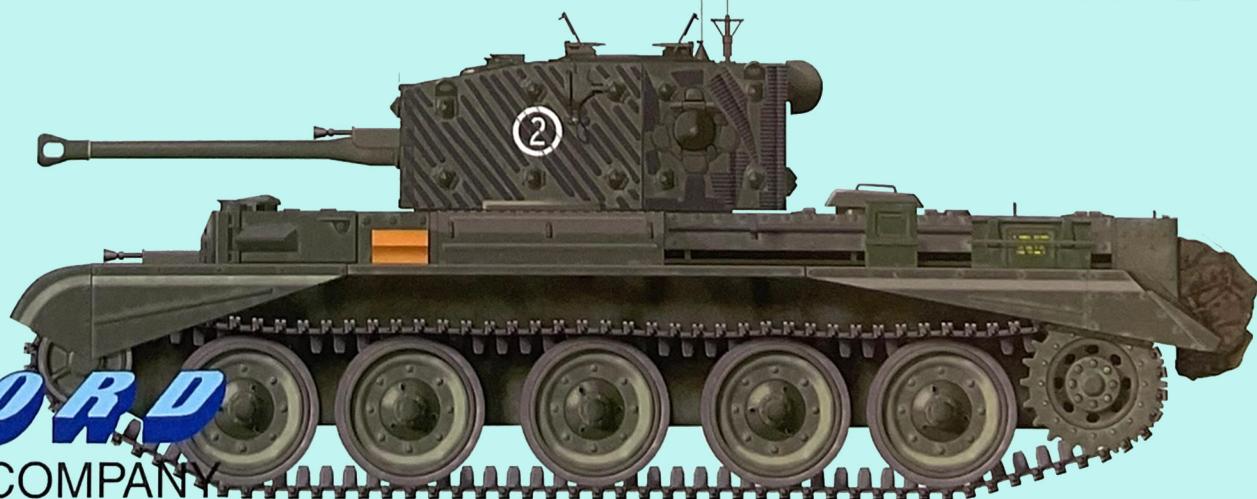


British Armour in North-West Europe

Volume 1. Normandy to Arnhem

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Author's Note

The colour plates in this book were all created using contemporary photographs as a reference. I have endeavoured not to render an ideal, but rather as faithful a reproduction as possible - including the shape and position of any markings and the style of lettering used. Where a specific marking or view is not shown it is because it was not visible in the photograph. I can however assure the reader that what is shown has been portrayed as accurately as my limited ability would allow. In cases where I have had to resort to speculation - most often on the question of colour - I have tried to make this clear.

The naming of tanks and other vehicles was a common practice in the British Army and many examples can be seen in the following pages. The most popular style used when applying names seems to have been to use capital, or upper case letters, and this is how they are recorded in the text when a photograph is available - for example AJAX. Where a name in a photograph is rendered in script - or where names are mentioned as a matter of interest, without reference to a photograph - sentence case has been used.

Front cover illustration

Cromwell IV, 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, France, July 1944

The Northants Yeomanry were the armoured reconnaissance regiment of 11th Armoured Division and C Squadron was perhaps unique in the British Army in applying strips of rubber to the hull and turret of their Cromwell tanks - no two styles of application being the same. Note that the squadron sign with enclosed troop number has been painted over the strips. An example can be seen in the photograph section (IWM B9098) and the regiment's colours and markings are discussed further in the illustrations.

Back cover illustration

Centaur IV, 2nd Battery, Royal Marine Armoured Support Group, France, June 1944

Originally intended to provide fire support on the invasion beaches, these 95mm armed tanks in fact soldiered on for almost three weeks. This tank of H Troop, 2nd Battery was named HUNTER by its crew and is depicted here in the earlier base colour of SCC2. This vehicle is shown in the photograph section (IWM B5457 and B5458) and the colours and markings of the Royal Marine's Centaur's are discussed further in the illustrations.

Introduction

To repeat the history of the 1944-45 campaign to liberate Europe – and the part played in those operations by the British Army – would be both pointless and wasteful. Detailed works, by far more competent authors, are readily available. What I have attempted here – in this, the first part of a two volume set – is to provide a snapshot of the major British units and formations which operated armoured vehicles in the battles which began on the beaches of Normandy in June 1944, and ended almost a year later in northern Germany.

The reader should note that when regiments or battalions are first mentioned I have endeavoured to use their full and correct titles as they were during the 1939-45 period. Subsequently they are referred to by generally accepted abbreviations. As sources sometimes differ, I have employed the names given in *Regulations for the Clothing of the Army*, published in 1936 and amendments including that of October 1939. In the case of units raised during the war I have referred, wherever possible, to regimental histories. In order to avoid the confusion of long and complicated titles, converted infantry battalions of the RAC are listed with their associations and full titles at the end of the text. When regiments or battalions are listed as part of a brigade they are shown in their order of seniority – or more correctly, precedence.

The reader should also be aware that although I have used the terms Achilles, Wolverine and Firefly, to describe the M10 17pdr self-propelled gun, the M10 3inch self-propelled gun and the 17pdr armed Sherman respectively, it is far from certain that these names were in use during the war. They may in fact be post-war appellations, since accepted into general usage.

The Armoured Divisions

In June 1944, each armoured division contained an armoured brigade made up of the brigade headquarters, three armoured regiments and a motor battalion of infantry transported in halftracks.

The armoured regiments comprised a HQ squadron and three tank squadrons referred to as A, B and C squadrons. The squadron HQ usually consisted of 2 tanks and controlled any Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs) or Close-support (CS) tanks. By June 1944 the fighting squadrons were divided into 4 troops and these were numbered sequentially throughout the regiment. The official establishment for each troop was 4 tanks, one of which was supposed to be a Firefly 17pdr, but in practice this number could vary. The allocation of Fireflies was by no means complete when the campaign commenced, some regiments receiving vehicles as late as 28 May 1944. As production increased some troops were able to field more than one Firefly. The CS tanks were removed from the Sherman squadrons and retained only with those regiments operating Cromwells. This may have been due to the Sherman's ability to fire both armour piercing and high explosive rounds thus eliminating the need for a specialist tank.

The regimental HQ contained 4 tanks – one for the CO, his second-in-command, the adjutant and the Regimental Sergeant Major. A HQ squadron controlled a reconnaissance troop of 11 Stuart light tanks and a communications troop, sometimes referred to as a Link Troop. This was a uniquely British innovation, of 9 Humber or Daimler Scout Cars and was essentially an armoured taxi service. One scout car was usually reserved for the regiment's commander. At the beginning of the campaign each regiment had an anti-aircraft troop of 6-8 Crusader AA tanks and although some units retained these, a great many AA units were converted to infantry, their vehicles being used as OP tanks. Confusingly, the AA Troops appeared on the official organisation tables until the end of the war.

The armoured divisions also contained an armoured reconnaissance

regiment organised almost identically to the armoured regiments but containing 5 troops in each squadron, all equipped with two Cromwell tanks and two Stuart light tanks. Each squadron HQ had two 75mm armed Cromwells and two CS versions with the 95mm gun. This was in effect a fourth armoured regiment and the reconnaissance role was actually carried out by the Corps armoured car regiments or by the Stuart tanks of the regimental recce troop.

The division's artillery was controlled by the Commander, Royal Artillery (CRA) - who in turn answered to the division HQ. Each of the armoured divisions had two field regiments, an anti-tank regiment and an anti-aircraft regiment. Some of these are discussed further under the section dealing with the Royal Artillery.

The British armoured division of 1944-45 was a large and complex organisation and the foregoing should be treated as an outline only. In addition to the tanks of the armoured regiments, the division controlled self-propelled artillery and anti-tank guns, tanks used for command and forward observation, recovery vehicles, armoured ambulances, scout cars, infantry carriers, halftracks and bridging tanks.

During the campaign in North-West Europe the British Army fielded four armoured divisions:

Guards Armoured Division

The division landed in France on 26 June 1944 and took part in the battles of Bourguebus Ridge, Mont Pincon, The Nederrijn and The Rhineland. It was famously engaged in Operation Market Garden under the command of XXX Corps

The armoured component of the division was 5th Guards Armoured Brigade consisting of 2nd Armoured Battalion Grenadier Guards, 1st Armoured Battalion Coldstream Guards and 2nd Armoured Battalion Irish Guards. In June 1944 these regiments were equipped with Sherman V tanks throughout, the division reporting that 36 Fireflies, 8 OP tanks and 157 tanks armed with the 75mm gun were on hand. The reconnaissance regiment was 2nd Armoured Battalion Welsh Guards equipped with Cromwells including the CS version. By December 1944 eleven Challengers armed with the 17pdr gun had been received. The division HQ also had under its control No.268 Forward Delivery Squadron (RAC).

7th Armoured Division

Made up almost entirely of units that had served in North Africa, the armoured regiments of this division – 1st Royal Tank Regiment, 5th Royal Tank Regiment and 4th County of London Yeomanry - were grouped into 22nd Armoured Brigade. The division's recce regiment was 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, another Desert veteran. Also controlled by division HQ was No.263 Forward Delivery Squadron (RAC).

Probably the most famous division of the British Army the "Desert Rats" arrived in Normandy on 8 June 1944 and served with distinction in clearing the way to, and then attacking Caen. On 13 June 1944, 4th County of London Yeomanry suffered severe losses after being surprised by an enemy force in the town of Villers-Bocage. Indeed, the regiment was so badly mauled that it was amalgamated with 3rd County of London Yeomanry of 4th Armoured Brigade from 29 July 1944 becoming 3rd/4th CLY. They were replaced by 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, which then became the senior regiment of the brigade.

The regiments of 22nd Armoured Brigade were equipped with Cromwells, being supported by one Firefly per troop – 1st RTR in fact had one extra Firefly on hand in June 1944. The division also reported 24 Cromwell VI CS tanks on hand for the invasion. As with most armoured

units the proportion of 17pdr tanks increased as these became available with the number on hand rising from 36 in June to 67 in December 1944.

The division soldiered on within 21st Army Group taking part in the liberation of Belgium, the Netherlands and northern Germany.

11th Armoured Division

Considered by many historians as the best British armoured formation to have served in North-West Europe. This division, under its capable and popular commander G.P.B. 'Pip' Roberts, took part in Operations Epsom and Goodwood in Normandy, the 'Great Swan' to Amiens, the liberation of Antwerp, Operation Market Garden and fought in the Ardennes. The division also captured areas of northern Germany up to the Danish border.

The division's 29th Armoured Brigade was made up of 23rd Hussars, 3rd Royal Tank Regiment and 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry. The recce regiment, 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, was replaced on 8 August by 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars. Also controlled by division HQ was No.270 Forward Delivery Squadron (RAC). The division's establishment and equipment was almost identical to that of the Guards until late 1944 when deliveries of the 77mm armed Comet began.

79th Armoured Division

It would not be possible to do justice to the role played by this division during the campaign in North-West Europe in a work of this size and indeed the story of the 79th Armoured Division would require its own book. A future volume may address this need, however some mention at least should be made of the regiments that served with the division.

The division came under the direct control of 21st Army Group and its organisation and equipment reflected its unique mission. The division's armoured vehicles were modified for specialist roles and as it was never intended to fight as a regular armoured formation there were no attached infantry or artillery regiments. Rather, the division's purpose was purely tactical and as such its brigades were self-supporting, with regiments or squadrons being detached as required. In June 1944, 79th Armoured Division contained the following brigades:

30th Armoured Brigade

Made up of the 22nd Dragoons, the 1st Lothians and Border Horse and the 2nd County of London Yeomanry (The Westminster Dragoons). This brigade operated Sherman Crab Flail tanks.

1st Tank Brigade

Comprising 11th Royal Tank Regiment, 42nd Royal Tank Regiment and 49th Royal Tank Regiment, this brigade was originally equipped with the Grant CDL (Canal Defence Light) and later converted to Buffalo Amphibians. The Brigade was disbanded in November 1944.

1st Assault Brigade, Royal Engineers

This brigade contained 5th, 6th and 42nd Assault Regiments, RE, equipped with Churchill AVRE (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers) armed with the 290mm Petard mortar. As support elements the brigade also included 149th Assault Park Squadron and 87th Assault Dozer squadron.

Also attached under the control of a RAC Headquarters Squadron were 1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment and 49th Armoured Carrier Regiment – both operating Kangaroo Personnel Carriers – and No.264 Special Delivery Squadron and No.269 Forward Delivery Squadron.

The Independent Armoured Brigades

These brigades were organised similarly to those attached to armoured divisions. They were however viewed as a general reserve to be controlled at Army level whose purpose was to support infantry divisions. Although the official establishment called for a motor battalion for each

brigade, only 4th and 8th Armoured Brigades seem to have received theirs. All were equipped with Sherman tanks.

4th Armoured Brigade

Comprising The Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons), 3rd County of London Yeomanry and 44th Royal Tank Regiment with 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps serving as the motor battalion, the brigade landed in Normandy on 7th June 1944. At that time the brigade was equipped in the main with Sherman IIs and VC Fireflies, having 157 and 36 on hand respectively. In July the remnants of 4th County of London Yeomanry joined the brigade forming 3rd/4th CLY. In August 1944 the brigade took part in Operation Bluecoat and helped in closing the Falaise Pocket. They then pushed on through Northern France into Belgium and Holland clearing German forces from the Low Countries as part of Operation Market Garden. In March 1945 the Brigade took part in the crossing of the Rhine, before advancing across Germany to Bremen, finally meeting up with the Russians at Wismar.

8th Armoured Brigade

In June 1944 the brigade comprised 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards, 24th Lancers and the Nottinghamshire Yeomanry – more popularly known as the Sherwood Rangers. The brigade's motor battalion was 12th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps. For the invasion of France, B and C Squadrons of the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards were equipped with Sherman II DD tanks landing on King sector, Gold Beach in support of 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

On 29 July 1944 24th Lancers were disbanded with most of the regiment's personnel going to other units in the 8th Armoured Brigade or the 29th Armoured Brigade of 11th Armoured Division. The Lancers were replaced by 13th/18th Hussars Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own). The markings used by this brigade are shown in the illustration section.

27th Armoured Brigade

Made up of 13th/18th Royal Hussars, the Staffordshire Yeomanry and the East Riding Yeomanry the brigade landed at Sword Beach as part of XXX Corps and fought in the battles around Caen. On 30th July 1944 the brigade was disbanded with 13th/18th Hussars taking over the vehicles of the Staffordshire Yeomanry and replacing 24th Lancers in 8th Armoured Brigade and the East Riding Yeomanry going to 33rd Armoured Brigade.

33rd Armoured Brigade

From June to August 1944, the brigade contained 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, 144th Regiment, RAC and 148th Regiment, RAC. When the brigade landed in Normandy its regiments were equipped with 166 Sherman I tanks, including 8 OP versions, and 36 Sherman VC Fireflies. In August 1944, 148th RAC was disbanded and replaced by the East Riding Yeomanry.

On 18 January 1945, the brigade – equipped with Buffaloes and Kangaroo personnel carriers – was attached to 79th Armoured Division. On 1 March 1945, 144th RAC was re-named 4th RTR. The markings used by this brigade are shown in the illustration section.

The Independent Tank Brigades

The organisation of these brigades differed from the armoured brigades, officially at least, in not containing an integral infantry battalion. Their mission was essentially the same however in that regiments, squadrons and even troops were allocated to infantry formations as the need arose. Unlike the armoured brigades each squadron contained five troops all equipped with Churchill infantry tanks. Each squadron HQ held two Churchill CS tanks armed with the 95mm gun. In January 1945 they were officially renamed Armoured Brigades.

6th Guards Tank Brigade

Landing in Normandy on 20 July 1944, the brigade contained 4th Tank Battalion Grenadier Guards, 4th Tank Battalion Coldstream Guards and

3rd Tank Battalion Scots Guards. In June 1944 the brigade was equipped with 164 Churchill Mk IVs, eight of these being OP tanks, 18 Mk VIIIs armed with the 75mm gun, 11 ARVs and 3 bridgelayers. Also listed were 164 conversion kits intended to upgrade the Mk IV tanks to Mk VII standard by the addition of a 75mm gun (the resulting conversion referred to as Mk VI). By December 1944 only 48 6pdr armed Mk IV tanks remained on strength.

Battalions of the Guards converted to an armoured role maintained the tradition of referring to squadrons by number: No.1 Squadron containing Troops 1-5; No.2 Squadron, Troops 6-10, and; No.3 Squadron, Troops 11-15. The exception to this was 3rd Scots Guards, which instead used the terms Right Flank Squadron, "S" Squadron and Left Flank Squadron. The markings used by this brigade are shown and discussed further in the illustration section.

Formally renamed 6th Guards Armoured Brigade on 2 February 1945, the brigade fought until the end of the war.

31st Tank Brigade

In June 1944 the brigade contained 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 9th Royal Tank Regiment and 141st Regiment, RAC. The two senior regiments did not arrive in France until 21 June 1944, however one troop of 141st RAC did land on D-Day equipped with Crocodile flame-throwing tanks based on the Churchill MK VII. The tanks were named, a known example being Skipper. On 21 June, 141st RAC left the brigade and was attached to 79th Armoured Division. The brigade, now made up of 7th RTR and 9th RTR, fought throughout the Normandy campaign - a Churchill of C Squadron, 7th RTR, commanded by Corporal B. Sheldon, famously destroying three Tigers on 10 July during the fighting for Hill 112.

In September 1944 the brigade was permanently attached to 79th Armoured Division and underwent several re-organisations until on 1st February 1945, it was renamed 31st Armoured Brigade. During that time the following regiments served as part of the brigade: 11th RTR, from 2 November to 22 December 1944; 1st Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, from 2 November 1944 to 1 February 1945; 141st RAC, which rejoined the brigade on 5 September; 144th RAC, briefly from 23 September to 31 September 1944; 49th Armoured Personnel Carrier Regiment, and; 1st Canadian APC Regiment.

The markings used by this brigade are shown in the illustration section.

34th Tank Brigade

The brigade landed in France on 3 July and was made up of 147th Regiment, RAC, 107th Regiment, RAC and 153rd Regiment, RAC - note the order of seniority. The brigade was equipped with a mixture of Churchill Mk III, IV, VI and VII tanks. On 4 September 1944, due to heavy losses, 153rd RAC was disbanded and replaced by 9th RTR.

Curiously, it seems that the normal order of precedence was not followed within this brigade with 107th RAC being relegated to the position of second senior regiment and 147th RAC taking the senior place. There is ample photographic evidence to support this. Further, when 9th RTR joined the brigade, it assumed the position of junior regiment previously held by 153rd RAC. This state of affairs was allowed to continue until February 1945 when the brigade was renamed 34th Armoured Brigade and the correct order of precedence was established. To confuse matters further, in October 1944, 7th RTR came under the orders of the brigade for a period of 4 months. It is far from certain however, that it was formally attached as some authors state. The markings used by this brigade are shown and discussed further in the illustration and photograph sections.

Armoured Car Regiments

These were independent regiments, one being attached to each Corps. They did however spend a considerable part of their existence attached to

armoured divisions - so much so that it is often assumed that they were integral units. Each comprised a HQ squadron and 4 fighting squadrons referred to as A, B, C and D Squadrons. In turn the squadrons were made up of a squadron HQ, a heavy troop, a support troop and 5 recce troops. The available evidence suggests that regiment, squadron and troop HQ were equipped with Staghound Armoured Cars and Humber Scout Cars - with the Daimler Armoured Cars and 'Dingos' going to the fighting squadrons. The heavy troop contained two 75mm armed AEC Armoured Cars. Each RHQ included an AA troop and although it was intended that these should have been the Staghound AA, converted Humber Mk I cars carrying four 7.92mm BESA machine guns were used until the Staghounds became available.

The regiments are shown in order of precedence.

2nd Household Cavalry Regiment

Formed from the Household Cavalry Composite Regiment, itself made up of the Life Guards and The Royal Horse Guards, the two most senior regiments of the British Army. Attached to VIII Corps and usually assigned to Guards Armoured Division, most famously for Operation Market Garden in September 1944. This regiment should not be confused with 1st Household Cavalry Regiment, which was sent to Germany in May 1945 from Italy, and attached to XXX Corps.

1st The Royal Dragoons

Attached to XII Corps the regiment arrived in France at the end of July 1944. For most of the campaign in North-West Europe the regiment served in squadron sized detachments. During the Rhine crossing, perhaps the British army's last major battle of the war, the regiment led the way with A and B Squadrons attached to 51st (Highland) Division and C and D Squadrons attached to 15th (Scottish) Division. By early April, the regiment was together again, acting as the advance recce element of 2nd Army. In June 1944, in addition to the standard equipment mentioned above, the Dragoons had eight 75mm equipped M3 (GMC) Halftracks which seem to have been replaced by the end of 1944.

11th Hussars

Attached to XXX Corps and assigned to 7th Armoured Division in September 1944. The regiment had in fact had a long association with the Desert Rats serving with the division throughout the latter part of the North African campaign and in Italy. In June 1944, the Hussars had on hand eight 75mm equipped M3 (GMC) Halftracks, some of which had been with the regiment during its service in Italy in 1943 and were only relinquished in January 1945, by which time their barrels were worn out.

The Inns of Court Regiment

Attached to I Corps and assigned to 11th Armoured Division in September 1944. The regiment took part in the D-Day landings, C Squadron being the only armoured car unit ashore on 6 June 1944. An ad hoc unit consisting of C Squadron and a party of Royal Engineers was tasked with infiltrating some 30 miles inland to demolish bridges over the Orne River in order to prevent a counterattack by German armoured units. The regiment also fought at Antwerp, and in the Rhineland.

As a matter of interest, the Inns to which the regiment's name refers are Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn, the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple, representing the hub of Britain's legal profession. When George III was informed that the regiment consisted entirely of lawyers, he was heard to remark that they were "The Devil's Own", and the nickname stuck.

Although three of these regiments were attached - on a semi-permanent basis at least - to armoured divisions in September 1944, there is ample photographic evidence that they continued to use both the Corps formation badges and the AoS sign of the RAC colours of green over blue with a 2inch white bar at the top and a white number 44.

Armoured Units of the Royal Artillery

While most regiments of the Royal Artillery used vehicles that could fairly be described as armoured - especially those used as armoured observation posts (AOPs) - this list is restricted to those units equipped with self-propelled artillery pieces, either serving as field artillery or in an anti-tank role. As far as possible correct and full titles have been used for each regiment and the abbreviation TA at the end of a regiment's name indicates a unit raised from the Territorial Army. The letters RA stand for, of course, Royal Artillery. This list is far from definitive - one obvious omission being the anti-aircraft units. A more detailed description of the AoS signs and RA tactical markings used by these regiments will be included in Volume 2, however some examples are shown in the illustration section.

3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery

This regiment originally consisted of two Batteries, D/J and M/P, later reformed as D, J and M – the batteries of the RHA being referred to by letters. During the North-West Europe campaign, 3rd RHA was the senior field regiment of 7th Armoured Division. The regiment is thought to have operated Sexton 25pdr self-propelled guns and Sherman OP tanks. The markings of this regiment are discussed further in the illustration section.

4th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery

Made up of Batteries C, DD and F, this regiment was attached to 5th AGRA (Army Groups Royal Artillery) of 2nd Army, landing in France on 8th June 1944. On 25 June 1944 the regiment was permanently attached to 4th Armoured Brigade for the remainder of the war and by 5th September 1944 it had converted from towed 25pdrs to Sexton self-propelled guns.

5th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery

Made up of Batteries G and K and attached to 7th Armoured Division. In February and March 1944 the regiment was re-equipped with Sexton self-propelled guns and Cromwell OP tanks in order to keep pace with the division's armour. The regiment served with 7th Armoured Division until the end of the war.

13th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, (Honourable Artillery Company) (TA)

Made up of Batteries G, H and I and attached to 11th Armoured Division this regiment was equipped with Sexton 25pdr self-propelled guns in February 1945.

7th Field Regiment, RA

Attached to the 3rd Infantry Division and comprising Batteries 9, 16 and 17/43 this regiment was equipped with 105mm Priest self-propelled guns in May 1944.

33rd Field Regiment, RA

Attached to the 3rd Infantry Division and containing Batteries 101, 109 and 113/114 this regiment was re-equipped with 105mm Priest self-propelled guns and Sherman OP tanks in May 1944 in preparation for the Normandy landings.

74th (Northumbrian) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

As the senior field regiment of 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division this unit was equipped with 105mm Priests and contained Batteries 296 (4th Durham) and 298 (1st Durham). When 50th Division returned to Britain in December 1944 the regiment was transferred to 49th (West Riding) Infantry Division and from that time used a combined 49th and 50th Division Formation badge.

76th (Highland) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to the 3rd Infantry Division and comprising Batteries 302, 303 and 454 - with 304 (City of Dundee) Battery joining the regiment just prior D-Day. Sources differ as to when this regiment was converted to the

self-propelled role – one giving June 1944 and another stating that the regiment landed in Normandy as a towed artillery unit and was re-equipped with 105mm Priest self-propelled guns in September 1944.

86th (East Anglian, Hertfordshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Formed from the Hertfordshire Yeomanry and made up of Batteries 341 (St Albans), 342 (Hertford) and 462. By May 1944 the regiment was re-equipped as a self-propelled unit operating both 105mm Priests and 25pdr Sextons supported by Sherman V OP tanks. In preparation for D-Day, special tactics were developed including firing from LCTs at sea. In June 1944, as 2nd Army troops, the regiment was attached to 8th Armoured Brigade. In September the regiment briefly came under the command of the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division and in December the Guards Armoured Division. In 1945 the regiment was attached to 5 AGRA. From April 1943 this Regiment was granted the privilege of wearing the RAC black beret with the Hertfordshire Yeomanry cap badge.

90th (City of London) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Made up of Batteries 357 (1st City of London), 358 (2nd City of London) and 465 this regiment was attached to 50th Infantry Division until November 1944 and then under the command of 5 AGRA. By May 1944 the regiment was operating 25pdr Sextons and Sherman V OP tanks.

94th Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to 43rd (Wessex) Division during the North-West Europe campaign and re-equipped as a self-propelled unit in late 1944 or early 1945.

98th Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Equipped as a self-propelled unit in 1943 with 105mm Priests, this regiment arrived in northern Europe in 1945, having served in Italy. Comprising Batteries 391, 392 and 471. The regiment was attached to 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade - which had also been transferred from Italy - under 2nd Army.

124th (Northumbrian) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to 50th Infantry Division and comprising Batteries 287 (3rd Northumbrian), and 288 (4th Northumbrian), the regiment was equipped with 105mm Priests.

147th (Essex Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Formed from 413 Battery, 104th (Essex Yeomanry) Regiment, RHA, this regiment was equipped as a self-propelled unit by May 1944 coming under the command of 2nd Army. In June 1944 the regiment was supporting 8th Armoured Brigade – during which time it used the Brigade's formation badge - returning to 2nd Army control in late 1944.

151st (Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to 11th Armoured Division as the junior field regiment. At the time of writing no documentary evidence was available regarding this regiment's equipment however there is photographic evidence that at least some Sextons were on hand.

153rd (Leicestershire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA (TA)

Equipped with 25pdr Sextons by May 1944, this regiment was the junior field artillery regiment of Guards Armoured Division until the war's end.

20th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

This regiment formed part of 3rd Infantry Division from 1939 until the end of the war comprising Batteries 41, 45, 67 and 101. In 1944 Battery 101 was equipped with M10 Wolverines and a number of Crusader AA tanks to be used by troop commanders as OP tanks. By April 1945 the regiment contained six towed 17pdr guns with twelve Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns. The Crusaders were replaced by Valentine XI OP tanks but it seems that the M10s were retained until the end of the war. The

markings of this regiment are discussed further in the illustration section

21st Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

The regiment was part of the Guards Armoured Division during the 1944-45 period and contained Batteries Q, Y, Z and BB. The regiment's M10s were named known examples being Ajax, Avalanche, Bahram, Bulldog and Corsair – all of Q Battery.

52nd (6th London) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

This regiment served in Sicily and Italy until March 1945 when it was transferred to northern Europe from Italy as part of 5th Infantry Division. The regiment contained Batteries 205, 206, 207 and 208.

54th (Queens Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to the 52nd (Lowland) Infantry Division this regiment contained Batteries 214 (Queens Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry), 215 (5th City of Glasgow), 295 and 304. By April 1945 the regiment was equipped with Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns and one M22 Locust airborne light tank, presumably used as a command vehicle.

55th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

Formed from the Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry and attached to 49th Infantry Division. The regiment was made up from Batteries 217 and 218 (Suffolk), 219 and 220 (Norfolk) and by November 1944 was equipped with Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns. As a matter of interest a duplicate regiment, numbered 65th, was formed around the Norfolk Batteries thereby reconstituting separate Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry regiments.

59th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

Formed from 6th (Duke of Connaught's Own) Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment and attached to 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division this regiment contained Batteries 233, 234, 235 and 236. In late 1944 the regiment was equipped with Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns and Valentine OP tanks.

61st Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Comprising Batteries 241, 242, 243 and 244 this regiment was attached to 51st (Highland) Infantry Division. By the time of Operation Plunder, March 1945, the regiment was equipped with Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns. The division's final situation report dated June 1945 shows 5 Valentine 6pdr and 3 Valentine 75mm on hand and these were possibly used as command tanks.

62nd Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to I Corps this regiment landed on D-Day in support of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. The regiment was made up of Batteries 245, 246, 247 and 248 and was equipped with M10 Wolverines, Achilles 17pdr self-propelled guns and 17pdr anti-tank guns towed by Crusader gun tractors. Also listed is a "Crusader command tank" which in all likelihood was a Crusader gun tractor or Crusader AA tank, both of which were used as command vehicles at this time. The markings of this regiment are discussed further in the illustration section.

65th (Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to 7th Armoured Division this regiment returned to Britain from Italy in 1944 and was completely re-equipped with towed 17pdr guns in Batteries 259 and 260 and Achilles 17pdrs, in Batteries 257 and 258 prior to landing in Normandy in June 1944. It served with the division until the end of the war.

68th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

In June 1944 this regiment, comprising Batteries 269, 270, 271 and 272, was attached to 59th (Staffordshire) Infantry Division. In August 1944 the division was disbanded and its men used as badly needed reinforcements.

71st Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to the 53rd (Welch) Infantry Division in April 1945, this regiment was re-equipped with Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns and used at least one M22 Locust airborne light tank, presumably as an AOP.

73rd Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to XXX Corps in June 1944 this regiment was equipped with two batteries of 17pdr guns towed by Crusader gun tractors, one battery of M10s (Battery 198) and one battery of Achilles 17pdr. In her history of the Northumberland Hussars, Joan Bright refers to Batteries 189 and 234 as the "two self-propelled Anti-Tank Batteries ... of the 73rd Anti-Tank Regiment". Another sources give Battery 198 as being equipped with M10 3inch guns.

75th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to 11th Armoured Division this regiment was made up of Batteries 117, 118 and 119. In June 1944 the regiment comprised two batteries using M10 Wolverines and Achilles 17pdr self-propelled guns and one battery of towed 17pdr guns. By December 1944 the regiment was equipped entirely with M10 Achilles 17pdrs and the towed units were disbanded to form two infantry companies.

86th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Formed from 5th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment and attached to XII Corps until November 1944 when the regiment was placed under the command of 2nd Army. In February 1945 the regiment was equipped with 17pdr guns towed by Crusader gun tractors, Achilles 17pdr self-propelled guns and Sherman OP tanks.

91st (Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Formed from 5th Battalion, The Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's), this regiment came under the command of VIII Corps until November 1944, when it was transferred to 2nd Army. In his history of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, Desmond Flowers states that Crusader AA tanks were used as OP vehicles. Crusader tractors were used to tow the regiment's 17pdrs and all vehicles were named for towns and villages of Scotland, some known examples being Drambuie, Dumfries, Dumbarton, Dundee, Dunoon and Duntocher. This unit was disbanded in January 1945, being replaced by 102nd Anti-Tank Regiment.

97th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Formed in July 1942 by the amalgamation of 63rd (Worcestershire & Oxfordshire Yeomanry) and 64th (The Queen's Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiments and attached to 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division. The regiment was disbanded in December 1944.

102nd (Northumberland Hussars) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA (TA)

Attached to 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division this regiment contained Batteries 287, 288 and 289 (prior to 1944 referred to as B, C and D batteries). Together with the anti-tank regiment of 3rd Infantry Division this unit was involved in the initial assault on the Normandy beaches and received two troops of four guns each of M10 Wolverines. It was originally intended that the M10s would provide a degree of mobile fire support for the initial landings only and would be replaced at some later date by towed guns. However, they remained with both regiments as a wasting asset and there is in fact evidence that they were retained until the end of the war. In November 1944 the remaining towed guns were replaced with Archer 17pdr self-propelled guns. On 5 December this regiment was transferred to 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division to replace 97th Anti-Tank Regiment which had been disbanded. Uniquely this regiment used as system of dark blue and light blue RA tactical signs.

Reconnaissance Regiments

The Reconnaissance Corps was created in 1941 as a direct result of the removal of the cavalry regiments from infantry divisions. In January 1944

the Corps was incorporated into the RAC while retaining its unique organisation and insignia - the universal issue of the RAC beret apparently took some time. In June 1944 each infantry division contained one regiment whose number and title generally corresponded to that of the division – the exception being 2nd Derbyshire Yeomanry, the recce regiment of 51st (Highland) Division. Each regiment was made up of a HQ squadron and three recce squadrons each containing three scout troops. Each troop generally contained 6 Bren Carriers, 2 Humber Armoured Cars and 2 Humber Scout Cars. The exception was, once again, 2nd Derbyshire Yeomanry who operated Daimler Armoured Cars and at least one Staghound.

6th Airborne Reconnaissance Regiment, RAC

Formed partly from men of several different units including the 10th Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales's Own), this regiment was attached to 1st Airborne Division.

A detachment landed in Normandy with perhaps 18 tanks (some sources give 20) using Hamilcar gliders. These vehicles were all Tetrarchs armed either with the 2pdr or 3inch gun. These were joined later by Cromwells and a number of Centaurs inherited from the Royal Marines. In August 1944 the unit had been withdrawn and by early September 1944, had been enlarged to a regiment of four squadrons. On 24th March the regiment took part in the Rhine crossing flying in 8 Locusts by Hamilcar glider, the Cromwells and other vehicles being transported by sea from England with all markings removed. The regiment served in Europe until the end of the war.

Royal Marine Armoured Support Group (RMASG)

Formed in March 1944 and consisting of 1st RM Armoured Support Regiment, 2nd RM Armoured Support Regiment and 5th RM (Independent) Armoured Support Battery, this group was intended as a purely assault formation yet remained in action for almost three weeks.

The two regiments were made up of two batteries each, numbered 1- 4. Each Battery contained four Troops designated A, B, C and D for 1st Battery, E, F, G and H for 2nd Battery, P, Q, S and T for 3rd battery and W, X, Y and Z for 4th Battery. The first troop of the independent 5th Battery was referred to as V, however which letters, if any, were used for the remaining troops are unknown. From the available photographs it appears that each tank was named to correspond with the troop letter. Each troop was divided into a Left and Right Section, each of two Centaurs with troop commanders using Sherman tanks. Each Section landed in a LCT(A) with the Shermans landing with the Left Section. Personnel included officers and gunner-drivers seconded from the Royal Artillery and fitters and mechanics from the RAC. The majority were however, Royal Marine gunners.

Originally intended to provide fire support on the invasion beaches, these tanks in fact soldiered on for almost three weeks. The surviving Centaurs were finally passed to 1st Canadian Centaur Battery and X (Armoured) Battery, 53rd Light Regiment, RA, – both via 6th Airborne Division – 27th Light AA Regiment's 6th Battery and the French 13 Regiment de Dragons.

The markings used by the Royal Marines are described and shown in the illustration section.

30 Assault Unit

Tasked with moving ahead of advancing Allied forces to undertake covert infiltrations into enemy territory this unit was composed of 33 (Royal Marines) Troop, 34 (Army) Troop, 35 (Royal Air Force) Troop and 36 (Royal Navy) Troop.

For the Normandy campaign the unit was divided into two independent formations codenamed Woolforce - the RN component - and Pikeforce - made up of Royal Marines – the Army troops having returned to Italy.

Landing at Juno Beach with the Canadians and Utah with the Americans they attempted to capture the German radar station at Douvres-la-Delivrande.

In North-West Europe the unit was mainly equipped with light vehicles such as Jeeps and Daimler "Dingo" Scout Cars. However, they also used Morris LRCs and, according to one source, Staghound Armoured Cars. A segment of film, undated although obviously taken in Germany very late in the war, may depict this unit. The vehicle shown, an armoured CMP, carries a Royal Navy serial number above a formation badge which very closely resembles the light blue number 30 on a dark blue rectangle used by 30 Assault Unit. To the left of these is a large, light-coloured rectangle with a darker, stylised anchor, almost identical to the insignia of the Beach Groups.

RAF Regiment

Dating back to the RAF Armoured Car Squadrons of the 1920's and 30's the regiment retained the airforce terms of Group, Wing and Squadron. By August 1944, 19 Wing headquarters, 18 Light Anti-aircraft Squadrons, 8 Rifle Squadrons and 4 Armoured Squadrons were operating in France. The story of the RAF Regiment is far beyond the scope of this work, however it can be said that the Armoured Squadrons operated Morris Reconnaissance Cars (CS9/LAC), Humber Light Reconnaissance Cars and possibly Humber Scout Cars. One source states that Canadian Otter Reconnaissance Cars mounting anti-aircraft guns were also used.

As stated earlier, a number of infantry battalions were converted to armoured units and as such came under the control of the RAC. Those mentioned in the text are listed below with the full title of their original battalion:

107th Regiment, RAC – 5th Battalion, The King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster)

141st Regiment, RAC – 7th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment)

144th Regiment, RAC – 8th Battalion, The East Lancashire Regiment

147th Regiment, RAC – 10th Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment

148th Regiment, RAC – 9th Battalion, The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)

153rd Regiment, RAC – 8th Battalion, The Essex Regiment

Note that the seniority suggested by the RAC Regiment number does not correspond to the order of precedence of the battalions. The Hampshire Regiment is sometimes referred to as "The Royal Hampshire Regiment" however, the royal accolade was not received until 1946.

The foregoing is of course not an exhaustive listing and among the units which could not be mentioned in detail are 21st Army Group Protection Troop which operated a number of Staghound Armoured Cars, the four Corps Protection Troops, the five British AGRAs which used tanks and carriers as AOPs, the Corps Signals and Artillery commands (CCRA) and the units of the Royal Engineers attached to 21st Army Group.

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The Cromwell IV tank of Major J.O. Spencer, the Commanding Officer of No. 2 Squadron, 2nd Battalion, Welsh Guards - the armoured recce regiment of Guards Armoured Division. The markings of this vehicle are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 31 March 1944. (IWM H37167)



A British LCT (Landing Craft Tank) loaded with Sherman IIIs and a VC Firefly nearest the camera, of C Squadron 13th/18th Hussars, at a port on the south coast of England during a pre-invasion exercise. May 1944. (IWM A23671)



Centaur tanks of 5th Independent Armoured Support Battery, Royal Marines Armoured Support Group, under command of 3rd Infantry Division. Tanks of this unit are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 29 April 1944. (IWM H37999)



Final preparations get underway as this Sherman III of the East Riding Yeomanry is reversed into a landing ship at Gosport. The AoS sign of a white 53 on a red square is clearly visible below the blue A Squadron sign. The number 1 on the turret side would seem to indicate a HQ vehicle, although it is known that vehicle number 2 was a Firefly. This tank has in the past been identified as belonging to 13th/18th Royal Hussars - a sin of which this author is also guilty. Curiously, what appears to be a large slab of concrete can be seen on the glacis. 1 June 1944. (IWM H38978)



A Sherman BARV (Beach Armoured Recovery Vehicle) passes Sherman III tanks of 13th/18th Royal Hussars during the regiment's move to Gosport. The BARV was based on the Sherman III and around sixty vehicles had been converted by D-Day. They were used by the eight Beach Recovery Sections of the REME to keep the invasion beaches clear and to assist vehicles bogged in the soft sand. As the BARVs were not intended to venture any further inland than the shoreline - although there is evidence to suggest that they did - they were painted Battleship Grey, and not SCC15 as is sometimes depicted. On the left of the BARV superstructure can be seen the formation badge of the independent Beach Groups - a red circle enclosing a red anchor on a light blue background. The flag-like marking on the right is actually a very large version of the REME AoS square in from top to bottom, blue, yellow and red. This is repeated on the side of the hull just below the WD Number. All other markings are in white. Some BARVs did carry regulation size AoS signs, although not all displayed the unit serial number or the diagonal white bar denoting army troops. Photographic evidence would suggest that the placement of these markings varied between vehicles, with some having none. 2 June 1944. (IWM H38987)



Taken in the first hours of the invasion, this photograph shows Sherman DD (Duplex Drive) tanks of B Squadron, 13th/18th Royal Hussars supporting No. 4 Army Commando advancing towards Ouistreham from Riva-Bella on Sword Beach. All of the tanks in this regiment carried large red two digit numbers on the turret outlined in white - one authoritative source stating that B Squadron used 44 to 58. However, the number 43 is clearly visible here and the regiment's history, written by Major General C.H. Miller CB CBE DSO, states that A and B Squadrons each consisted of a Squadron HQ of 2 Sherman DDs, and 4 troops of 4 Sherman DDs each - for a total of 36 tanks combined. The significance of the coloured panel or flag displayed on the rear of the vehicle's screen has been the subject of debate, but may be explained by an Operations Order for D-Day which specified the use of coloured flags to communicate simple messages. The colours red and yellow indicated that a tank had been disabled, and a green and white flag signalled 'advance' or 'follow'. These colours correspond to the system of signal flags used earlier in the war and it is probably the latter which can be seen here incorporated into a chequered, rather than a diagonally halved design. 6 June 1944. (IWM MH2011)



From the same sequence as MH2011, Sherman DD tanks of B Squadron, 13th/18th Royal Hussars provide fire support and cover for No. 4 Army Commando during house-to-house fighting near Ouistreham. The red outlined white call sign is unusual in that it incorporates the WD Number. Note that the chequered flag seen previously is not displayed on these tanks. 6 June 1944. (IWM MH2012)

During the assault on Strongpoint WN 26 at Langrune-sur-Mer, Lieutenant Colonel J.L. Moulton DSO, the Officer Commanding No. 48 Royal Marine Commando, watches the progress of a Canadian M10 Wolverine. In the background can be seen a disabled Centaur of 4th Battery, Royal Marine Armoured Support Group - the AoS sign just visible in the original photograph - knocked out while engaging the defences of an anti-tank wall situated further along the road. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5148)



A Centaur of one of the batteries of the Royal Marine Armoured Support Groups said to have been photographed on Nan Red Sector, Juno Beach, near Courseulles-sur-Mer. Unfortunately, no unit markings are visible. 6 June 1944. (National Archives of Canada)



A Cromwell IV said to be of 7th Armoured Division, drives through shallow water onto Jig Green, Gold Beach near le Hamel, having disembarked from the LS(T) (Landing Ship, Tank) on the left. Although not the best quality, this photograph shows the use of the wading stack on both the exhaust and turret. Note also the two cables arranged for easy access in the event the tank became bogged in soft sand. The WD Number, T187653, is clearly visible on the turret side. 7 June 1944. (IWM MH2014)

Although the censor has obscured the formation badge, this Sherman III almost certainly belongs to A Squadron 24th Lancers. At this time the Lancers were equipped with Sherman IIIs and VC Fireflies, and most crews seem to have followed the convention of naming their tanks beginning with the squadron letter, although exceptions such as Pin Up Girl, The Ram and Take it Easy have been seen. The RHQ used the names of three of the four 'Horsemen of the Apocalypse' - Death, Famine and War. The name Armageddon has been painted in script, in the centre of the transmission cover to the right of the yellow A Squadron sign. Other known examples from this unit were 'Appy', 'Ampstead', 'Butcher of Cumberland', 'Brigand', 'Buccaneer' and 'Blimey Bill'. Of note is the waterproofing on the main gun and hull MG. 6 June 1944. (IWM A23942)



A Universal Carrier T168748, of 3rd Infantry Division waits while M5 Halftracks of 27th Armoured Brigade are directed through Hermanville-sur-Mer by the division's MPs. The well known 'Pregnant Pilchard' formation badge can be seen on the right front mudguard (as viewed) of the nearest halftrack. Also visible is a B Squadron sign on the driver's door. The unit serial number 50 shown on the carrier identifies 245th Field Company, RE - the Arm of Service colour of the Engineers being cobalt blue. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5023)

Priest 105mm self-propelled guns near Lion-sur-Mer. No formation badge is visible, but the AoS sign of a white 43 on the vehicle in the bottom right corner would seem to indicate that this gun belongs to the second senior field artillery regiment of an infantry division. The most likely candidate is 33rd Field Regiment RA, which was equipped with Priests and Sherman OPs at this time. The other second senior regiments of the infantry divisions in Normandy were all towed units except 90th Field Regiment, which was equipped with Sextons. The name DAINTY is just visible on the vehicle in the background. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5032)



A Sherman V and Universal Carrier wait to advance. Just visible on the tank's hull to the right of the appliqué armour are the letters GD in white on a coloured square - presumably red over blue - denoting the OP vehicle of D Troop, 2nd Battery of a field artillery regiment. The solid white rectangle is unusual as this marking was used to identify the 4th or D Squadron of an armoured reconnaissance regiment. Of note are the wooden boards supported by a metal frame at the rear of the hull. The WD Number, T148161, can be seen below. The marking on the side of the Universal Carrier identifies a squadron HQ. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5033)



A Universal Carrier, with part of its WD Number T87035 visible on the hull front, fitted with wading screens moves inland from Sword Beach. The unit serial number 43 is visible on the nearest mudguard and denotes the second senior field artillery regiment of an infantry division. As this photograph was taken in the early hours of the landing, the unit is probably 33rd Field Regiment, RA of 3rd Infantry Division. The notation M2 seen to the left of the hand-painted white star, identifies one of the battery officers. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5038)



A Churchill AVRE, the name BULLDOG painted in white on a black rectangle on the hull side, waits as Universal Carriers - their deep wading screens partially removed - pass through La Brèche-d'Hermanville, Queen Sector, Sword Beach. The insignia worn on the shoulder of the man in the nearest carrier is that of the 2nd Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry of 185th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. The AoS sign visible on the mudguard of the following carrier is unusual, as 64 on a black square would normally indicate a medium MG battalion attached to a division HQ - here the most likely candidate being 2nd Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment. However, the 2 inch white bar on top of the sign indicating corps troops is quite unmistakable. The markings on the AVRE are usually identified as 6th Assault Regiment, RE of 79th Armoured Division's 1st Assault Brigade, yet this regiment landed some 8 miles to the west near Courseulles-sur-Mer, and hence this vehicle is more likely of 5th Assault Regiment. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5040)

Two Churchill AVREs of 5th Assault Regiment, RE, flank Universal Carriers from 2nd Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment, 8th Infantry Brigade of 3rd Infantry Division and an ambulance Jeep. The Churchill at right bears the name CHEETAH, painted in white between the hull access door and the air intake. This photograph was taken on Queen Sector, Sword Beach within the first hours of the invasion. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5085)



Taken from the same sequence as B5085, this photograph gives a closer view of one of the 5th Assault Regiment AVREs. Note the exhaust extensions on the rear hull, visible behind the framework used to brace the S.B.G. Bridge. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5096)

The Sherman V in this photograph has previously been identified as belonging to the 13th/18th Royal Hussars. However the Hussars were equipped with Sherman IIIs. Only their DD tanks and Fireflies were based on the Sherman V. Furthermore, this regiment's markings were usually displayed prominently on the transmission housing. This tank may be from the same unit as the Achilles 17pdrs in the background whose AoS sign - a white 46 on a red over blue square - is just visible on the right rear of the hull of the closest vehicle. Note that the exhaust wading stacks are still present on these Achilles. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5080)



Men of the 3rd Infantry Division take shelter near an M10 Wolverine. This vehicle is almost certainly from the same unit as the M10 shown in the illustration section - 20th Anti-Tank Regiment of 3rd Infantry Division. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5088)

Dejected German prisoners, up to their knees in the sea, wait for collection in the shadow of a disabled Sherman Crab of 79th Armoured Division's 30th Armoured Brigade. The exhaust wading stack is still in place and in common with other tanks of this brigade the turret bears a red outlined white number, only just visible here to the right of the camouflage netting. Note that the waterproof fabric cover for the main gun appears to have been shot away. This cover also served to keep out the considerable clouds of dust thrown up by the flail. 6 June 1944. (IWM B5089)





A well known photograph of a Crusader AA Mk III tank SKYRAKER - THE PRINCESS, of 1st Royal Tank Regiment, 22nd Armoured Brigade of 7th Armoured Division. Not as commonly observed is that all of the following Stuart Vs except for two, have had their turrets removed and carry what appear to be a large circular cover - probably of wood, as metal would be far too heavy to lean against the wading stacks - stowed on the rear deck. Many units including 11th Armoured Division, removed the turrets from some of their Stuarts as the campaign progressed, but the official date of this photograph - 7 June 1944 - would suggest that these modifications were carried out in England. (IWM B5124)



A Crusader AA Mk III tank bearing the name ALLAHKEEFIK on the turret side comes ashore from a landing ship. On the hull front can be seen from left to right: the combined formation badge of 22nd Armoured Brigade and AoS sign of brigade HQ; the vehicle's WD Number, T127084; and the 7th Armoured Division 'Jerboa' formation badge. The brigade HQ had only two of these vehicles on hand at the time of the landing and Corporal Hedley Gunther, who had been transferred from the 2nd Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, commanded the tank seen here. Names derived from Arabic colloquialisms were popular with the North African veterans of this division - the correct spelling being open to interpretation. The name seen here translates loosely as: "I'm not bothered". 7 June 1944. (IWM B5129)



A disabled Sherman Crab of 22nd Dragoons, 79th Armoured Division, lies abandoned on Queen White Sector, Sword Beach. The division's formation badge is visible on the hull rear behind the jerry can on the left. Somewhat obscured by shadow on the right-hand side is the AoS sign of a white 51 on a red square, indicating the senior regiment of 30th Armoured Brigade. Note also that while this tank carries the red outlined white numbers regularly seen on this brigade's tanks, there is also a large white 2H on the turret rear and hull side. This marking was used for the initial landings and indicates the exit or Lane to which a vehicle was assigned, with H denoting a Crab. 7 June 1944. (IWM B5192)



A Sherman III comes ashore from a landing craft on Gold Beach. The turret bears a white number 52 in front of an A Squadron sign - both of which appear to have been applied in something of a hurry. The name ABERDEEN, again in white, is painted just behind the newly applied appliqué armour which now obscures the WD Number. Just visible in the original photograph on the rear of the M5 Halftrack in the background is the formation badge of the 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division, and AoS sign of a unit of the Royal Corps of Signals with a number in the 40 series. 7 June 1944. (IWM B5258)



A Sherman III of HQ, 8th Armoured Brigade drives clear of a landing craft on the first day of the invasion. The canvas waterproofing to the main gun, machine gun and ventilators can be seen here - a black, waterproof sealant was liberally applied around all the joints. Instructions and identification marks for the use of the landing ships are applied, in chalk on the hull side and more permanently on the hull front next to the headlights. The brigade's well known 'Fox Face' formation badge with the combined AoS sign of a white 993 on a red square, incorporating the 2 inch white bar identifying army troops, has been painted onto the transmission cover to the right of the name VIRGIN. 10 June 1944. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

This Sherman tank is usually identified with 13th/18th Royal Hussars. However it displays several features of the Sherman V and at this time the Hussars' gun tanks were all Sherman IIIs. The Hussars' distinctive red turret numbers outlined in white are also missing. A cable reel at the rear of the hull covered by the camouflage netting suggests that this may be a command tank. The arrangement of the brackets used to hold the extra wireless aerials and the absence of the blanket box is very similar to the Crab flail tanks of 30th Armoured Brigade. 10 June 1944. (IWM B5294)



A Sherman VC Firefly of 24th Lancers, 8th Armoured Brigade, near St. Leger. An A Squadron sign in the yellow of the second senior regiment is visible on the turret side and directly below that on the hull is the vehicle's WD Number T148496, in white. The combined 8th Armoured Brigade and AoS sign of a white 995 underlined with a white bar on a red square is carried on the left of the hull rear. Of note is the unusual extension to the "antenna pot" on the glacis. 11 June 1944. (IWM B5416)

Centaur IV tank HUNTER of H Troop, 2nd Battery, Royal Marine Armoured Support Group. The commander wears the RAC black beret with the badge of the RTR, while the crewman in what would have been the hull machine gunner's position wears the badge of the Royal Marines. The crews of these vehicles were drawn from the Marines, the Royal Artillery and the RAC. Note that the two outside brushguards on the headlights have been painted white, a common but not universal feature of these vehicles. The markings of these tanks are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 13 June 1944. (IWM B5457)





The same tank as shown in B5457 near Tilly-sur-Seulles. The markings of the RM Centaurs are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 13 June 1944. (IWM B5458)

In addition to the 95mm armed Centaurs, the Royal Marine Support Groups were equipped with Sherman V tanks, used as command and control vehicles. The tank seen here has the distinctive compass rose used by this unit painted in white numbers around the turret - note that the calibrations continue across the gun mount. A crew member standing outside the turret was able to direct the tank's fire by lining up the numbers with the target. The name FOX, indicating F Battery, and a red/white/red recognition marking are painted on the transmission housing. An aerial recognition sign of a white five-pointed star, authorised in April 1944 and intended to replace the RAF-style roundel, is displayed on the turret top. 13 June 1944. (IWM B5454)





Infantry resting in Douvres-la-Délivrande on their way to the front line while a Universal Carrier with wading screens undergoes repairs. Despite the best efforts of the censor, the formation badge of 3rd Infantry Division is still visible on the hull front and the unit serial number of a white 61 identifies 1st Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers - as does the cap badge on the Tam-o'-Shanter on the soldier at the bottom right of the photo. The lorry in the background displays the formation badge of I Corps on the right front mudguard and the AoS sign a corps armoured car regiment, in this case The Inns of Court Regiment. 13 June 1944. (IWM B5510A)

Previously identified as 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, this Cromwell tank named OLIVER, passing troops of I Corps in Hérouvillette, is in fact from HQ 11th Armoured Division. The AoS sign of a white 40 on a black square can be seen to the left of the driver's position. The notation seen at the top left of the turret, 30285, is also repeated below the WD Number, T187740. Just visible on the front glacis above the WD Number some wit has left the comment WOT NO BOAT? 14 June 1944. (IWM B5557)



A waterproofed Cromwell IV of 22nd Armoured Brigade is towed from the soft sand of Gold Beach by a Caterpillar Dozer. The tank's WD Number, T187832, is displayed on the hull front, the turret wading stack and on the turret side above the name SATAN'S CHARIOT. A photograph or painting of a young woman can be seen to the right of the driver's position and looks to be framed in what may be waterproofing sealant. Note that the rear part of the sandshield has been inverted - a method of providing extra stowage space more commonly seen on Shermans. 14 June 1944. (IWM B5580)



Crewmen rest alongside their Cromwell tank, WD Number T187675, of 22nd Armoured Brigade HQ. The 9mm Sten sub-machine gun, kept nearby on the top of the tracks, may indicate that the front-line is not too far away. 15 June 1944. (IWM B5598)



Captain Leslie "Bill" Cotton MC, MM (at left) of 4th County of London Yeomanry, 7th Armoured Division, with the crew of his Cromwell VI. Lieutenant Cotton was promoted to Captain following his regiment's action at Villers-Bocage, where as a troop commander he left the safety of his tank to direct the battle on foot, occasionally returning to use his vehicle's wireless. Dogged by torrential rain, in addition to German bullets, Lt. Cotton carried as his only protection an umbrella and a blanket soaked in petrol with which he intended to burn any disabled tanks. His tank's name, OLD BILL - and the popular cartoon character of the same name - can be seen to the right of the hull machine gun. Both Capt. Cotton and the Lance Corporal sitting on the hull at right are wearing the RAC beret with the green band worn by some members of this regiment. The cap badges are all of 4th CLY, the two men in the centre wearing smaller, embroidered versions. I can offer no explanation however as to why Capt. Cotton is wearing a German Iron Cross 1st Class, on what appears to be an Italian pilot's jacket. 17 June 1944. (IWM B5682)



Stuart V tanks of 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, the armoured recce regiment of 7th Armoured Division. The division's formation badge can be seen on the left of the glacis and the name HALCYON is just visible on the hull side. 15 June 1944. (IWM B5608)



A heavily camouflaged Priest 105mm self-propelled gun said to have been photographed during the assault on Caen in mid-June 1944. Although the official caption identifies this as 31st Field Regiment, RA, this unit spent most of the war in the Mediterranean, and was at this time serving in Italy with 4th Indian Division. This may have been a simple error on the part of the photographer who recorded the name and location of the unit, the correct number perhaps being 33rd Field Regiment, RA of 3rd Infantry Division. As no identifying markings are visible, this vehicle may however belong to any of the regiments operating Priests at this time. Just visible on the hull side behind the foliage is a letter E and below that the letters ETER. Further to the right is painted what appears to be a white figure kneeling to pray. 17 June 1944. (IWM B5766)



An M5 Halftrack of a Royal Navy Forward Observation Bombardment (FOB) unit in the Sword Beach area. The ROYAL NAVY title can be seen on the shoulder of the man on the ground. Although difficult to discern even on the original photograph, a version of the Combined Operations Badge with the number 83 has been painted to the right of the access door on the rear of the halftrack. While it is not possible to determine colour from a monochrome photograph, the badge does appear to be similar to that seen on vehicles used by the Beach Groups - a light blue background with the insignia in red and the number 83 in white. 22 June 1944. (IWM A24353)



A Universal Carrier with wading screens still partially intact leads a column of motorcycles and other carriers inland from Arromanches. The AoS sign of a white 63 on a green square identifies the junior regiment of an infantry brigade attached to an armoured division. Each motorcycle carries an AoS sign on the front mudguard and although the number is illegible, a white bar denoting corps troops can be seen on the motorcycle nearest the camera. 22 June 1944. (IWM B5913)



A Churchill IV of 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 31st Tank Brigade, photographed during Operation Epsom. This vehicle is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 26 June 1944. (IWM B5993)



Taken from the same sequence as B5993, a Churchill IV of 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 31st Tank Brigade, covers a Jeep and two Lloyd Carriers towing 6pdr anti-tank guns of 7th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division. Both front mudguards carry what at first glance appear to be painted figures, but on closer inspection may in fact be some kind of relief sculpture - the shadows being consistent on all. That on the left has a large - approximately 18 inches high - image of a young woman with the name "Monica" in elaborate script just off her right shoulder. The mudguard at the right of the photo has a dancing figure about 9 inches in height close to the inside edge. I would be grateful to any reader who can shed any further light on this subject. 26 June 1944. (IWM B6002)



A well known photograph of TAUREG II, WD Number T187816, a Cromwell of 11th Armoured Division HQ leading a Centaur OP tank - note the dummy gun - and two Shermans during Operation Epsom. The AoS sign of a white 40 on a black square can be seen to the left of the driver's position and the division's formation badge is visible below the name. Note that the commander's hatches on the two leading tanks have been fitted with a metal frame on which maps have been clipped. These are presumably temporary fixtures and could be removed to allow the hatches to close. The lead vehicle is not - as has been stated elsewhere - the command tank of the Division's GOC Major General G.P.B. "Pip" Roberts CB, DSO, MC, whose Cromwell was named TAURUS in an obvious allusion to the division's famous 'Black Bull' formation badge. 26 June 1944. (IWM B6011)



Infantrymen of the 43rd (Wessex) Division pass lorries bearing the formation badge of 21st Army Group during Operation Epsom. In the centre of the photograph is an M5 Halftrack of a Royal Corps of Signals unit attached to 179th Field Regiment RA, of 43rd Division. The AoS sign of a red 44 on a white over blue background can be seen on the mudguard at left, just above the walking officer's helmet. To the left is a Sherman V, and beyond that a Crab - the red outlined white turret numbers common to 30th Armoured Brigade just visible. The object in the foreground is a Sherman Crab's flail. 26 June 1944. (IWM B6014)



A Crusader Gun Tractor with wading screens still in place, tows a 17pdr anti-tank gun through a French town. Although the censor has obliterated the formation badge - the white mark above the name DUNTOCHER - this vehicle almost certainly belongs to 91st (Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA attached to VIII Corps. The AoS sign of a corps anti-tank regiment can be seen to the left of the driver's position and above that is the RA tactical marking denoting the 2nd Battery. Other names used by this regiment are discussed in the introduction. The WD Number, although partly obscured, appears to be T126678. Of note is the unusual relief sculpture incorporating a thistle on the wading screen. 28 June 1944. (National Archives of Canada)

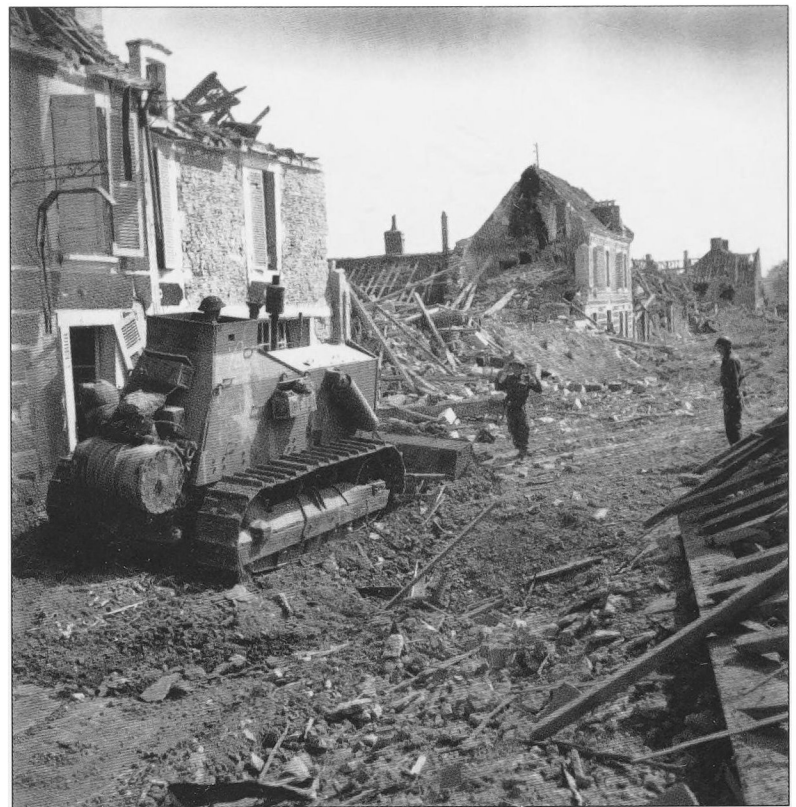
Tank and infantry officers confer on the turret of a Churchill IV of 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 31st Tank Brigade, during Operation Epsom. The red HQ Squadron sign can be seen to the left of the main gun with its heavy counterweight. The officer at the extreme left of the photograph wears the yellow and red RAC Arm of Service strip and below that the embroidered RTR badge. As a matter of interest and in the hope of pre-empting any confusion, the colours used for Arm of Service strips should not be equated with the colours used for Arm of Service vehicle markings, although in some cases they were the same. 28 June 1944. (IWM B6113)



A Churchill IV of 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 31st Tank Brigade photographed during Operation Epsom. Note the ammunition cases welded to the turret as extra stowage and the Vickers MG on the turret roof. The supporting infantry are from 8th Battalion Royal Scots of 15th (Scottish) Division's 44th Infantry (Lowland) Brigade. The markings of the tanks of this regiment are discussed further and shown in the illustration section. 28 June 1944. (IWM B6124)



A Morris Light Reconnaissance Car Mk II of 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division waits while lorries carrying wood and canvas folding boats pass through Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse. The division's colourful formation badge can be seen on the rear hull of the Morris, and next to this is the AoS sign of a white 40 on a (probably) cobalt blue background identifying HQ Royal Engineers attached to an infantry division. The AoS sign on the lorry at the centre of the picture indicates Line of Communication troops although I have not yet been able to identify the unit serial number of 1517. 30 June 1944. (IWM B6233)



An armoured Caterpillar D7 bulldozer equipped with a Hyser D7N winch at the rear. Note the number 4 on the hull side above the allied recognition star. At least one photograph shows one of these armoured bulldozers marked with the AoS sign of a REME Light Aid Detachment of a Field Park Company attached to an infantry division - a white number 48 on a blue over yellow over red square. June 1944. (IWM B7782)



A Cromwell mounts a steep hedge in the bocage. Although impossible to identify, this tank does appear very similar to others of 22nd Armoured Brigade, particularly in the application of the foliage as camouflage and in the arrangement of stowage. Note the extension fitted to the exhaust - the so-called "Normandy Cowl". 1 July 1944. (National Archives of Canada)



A Sherman VC Firefly, WD Number T228777, advances across an open field in the Norman countryside. The name ERICH has been painted on the hull side. 1 July 1944. (National Archives of Canada)



A Sherman tank, possibly a Sherman V, fitted with an M1 Dozer Blade. Derived from a 1943 field modification which adapted the hydraulic dozer blade from a Caterpillar D8, the later M1 Dozer Blade was standardised to fit any Sherman with VVSS. The use of Sherman Dozers is often incorrectly linked to 87th Assault Dozer Squadron of 79th Armoured Division's 1st Assault Brigade, RE. In fact this squadron was equipped with Centaur Dozers and if the identification of this tank as a Sherman V is correct then it may belong to either 11th Armoured or Guards Armoured Division. The extensive use of camouflage netting was a common sight in Normandy. 4 July 1944. (IWM B6371)



A Cromwell ARV towing a captured German PzKpfw IV tank of 12th SS Panzer Division. In June 1944, 7th Armoured Division had 14 of these vehicles on hand, while 3 were with 11th Armoured. 6 July 1944. (IWM B6518)



Certainly not an armoured vehicle, but an interesting photograph and one that illustrates that regulation markings were applied even in the field - although I would not dare to suggest that those seen here were applied using the paintbrush held by the Corporal on the right. The formation badge is the well known 'Black Bull' of 11th Armoured Division and the AoS sign of a white 51 on a red square identifies the 23rd Hussars, the senior regiment of 29th Armoured Brigade. This Schwimmwagen was captured from 12th SS Panzer Division which may strengthen the case for identifying the Cromwell ARV in B6518 as belonging to 11th Armoured. 6 July 1944. (IWM B6525)



A Priest 105mm self-propelled gun fires on enemy positions near Caen. The formation badge on the crewmen and the AoS sign of a white 42 on a red over blue square on the hull rear identify this as 7th Field Regiment, RA of 3rd Infantry Division. On the original photograph the name LOVELY can be read through the camouflage netting on the hull side. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6575)



A Stuart III and Sherman tanks of 144th RAC, 33rd Armoured Brigade during Operation Charnwood, the attack on Caen. All of the latter type are Shermans Is, except number 65 which is a VC Firefly. The Brigade's green on black 'Diabolo' formation badge outlined in white, is carried on the rear hull on the left hand side and is almost totally obscured by dust. The AoS sign of a white 174 on a red square has been painted onto the box containing the infantry telephone on the right. The markings of this regiment are also shown in the illustration section. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6652)



Brigadier N.W. Duncan of 30th Armoured Brigade, 79th Armoured Division, watches the attack on Caen from beside his Humber Scout Car outside Biéville-Beuville. The AoS sign identifying an armoured brigade HQ - a white 50 on a red square - is shown here on the right rear mudguard, whilst the left features 79th Armoured Division's colourful formation badge. The unit serial number 50 has been repeated in what appears to be black on white below the exhaust louvres. Also of note is the non-standard luggage rack and the mounting for the Bren Gun. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6656)



From the same sequence as B6656, a Priest 105mm self-propelled gun of 7th Field Regiment, RA passes Brigadier Duncan's Humber Scout Car. The markings described in the previous photograph are repeated on the front of the Humber with the addition of the bridging classification - a black 3 on a yellow circle - used for this type of vehicle. A metal plate has been welded across the front of the Priest between the mudguards and on this can be seen from left to right: the AoS sign of a senior field artillery regiment; a RA tactical sign denoting B Troop, 1st Battery; and the formation badge of 3rd Infantry Division. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6657)



A Churchill AVRE on the road to Caen. Of note are the extra lengths of track welded to the hull and turret fronts. Unfortunately no markings are visible. 9 July 1944. (IWM B6729)



A Humber Scout Car transporting German prisoners to the rear during the fighting for Caen. Below the WD Number F195736, can be seen a HQ Squadron sign, possibly in yellow. On the hull side the vehicle's name, PAT, has been painted in white. 9 July 1944. (IWM B6744)



A Sherman V used as an AOP by the 2nd Battery of a field artillery regiment, the letters RC on the tactical sign painted onto the transmission housing indicating the commander of C Troop. Also of note is the unusually large hand painted allied star on the turret. This vehicle is in fact from a Canadian unit, although the system of tactical markings is the same as that used by British regiments. 10 July 1944. (National Archives of Canada)



Carriers and a halftrack of 59th (Staffordshire) Division advancing with infantry during the fighting around Caen. On the left mudguard of the nearest carrier can be seen the AoS sign of a white 46 on a red over blue square identifying the anti-tank regiment of an infantry division - in this case 68th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA. Note that the unit serial number is repeated on the headlight. 11 July 1944. (IWM B6866)



Churchill AVRE of 79th Armoured Division moving into Caen passes a Jeep and knocked-out carrier. 10 July 1944. (IWM B6901)



A Sherman V of HQ 29th Armoured Brigade, 11th Armoured Division dwarfs an artillery OP carrier as it moves towards Colleville. The division's well known 'Black Bull' formation badge can be seen under the hull MG. Of note are the mismatched tracks on the left hand side. 11 July 1944. (IWM B6980)



Churchill crews of 31st Tank Brigade pose for the camera with their extensively camouflaged vehicles. Although no identifying markings are visible on the tanks, the cap badges worn by the men are those of the Royal Tank Regiment making this either 7th or 9th RTR. In the centre-left of the photograph are two Churchill Vs, armed with the 95mm Howitzer. Behind these is what appears to be a Churchill VII, although officially this brigade had none on hand at this time. 13 July 1944. (IWM B7078)



A Lloyd Carrier of 8th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment - the support battalion of 43rd (Wessex) Division - advances during operations in the Odon valley, west of Caen. Note the AoS sign of a white 64 on a black square and the circular bridging classification marking used for a vehicle towing a trailer. The division's colourful formation badge can be seen on the right of the hull front. These carriers and their trailers were used to transport the battalion's 4.2 inch mortars. What appears to be some kind of base plate, although not that of the mortar mentioned here, is carried on the glacis next to the spare wheel. 16 July 1944. (IWM B7425)

A Churchill III moves up towards the village of Tourville, in preparation for an attack on Hill 112. On 10 July, 9th RTR of 31st Tank Brigade was famously engaged against heavy German opposition in this area. 16 July 1944. (IWM B7443)



A military policeman of 15th Provost Company, 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division guides a Humber Scout Car of 147th Regiment, RAC, 34th Tank Brigade across a bridge over the Odon. This armoured regiment was formed from 10th Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment in 1941. Note the AoS sign - a white number 156 on a green square incorporating the white bar that identified army troops - and the 2nd Army formation badge. 16 July 1944. (IWM B7594)



A Sherman Crab flail tank of the 22nd Dragoons, crosses a Bailey Bridge over the Orne as it moves up to the start line for Operation Goodwood. The Dragoons were the senior regiment of 79th Armoured Division's 30th Armoured Brigade. Of note is the extra bracket for a third wireless aerial welded to the turret just below the commander's cupola. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7498)



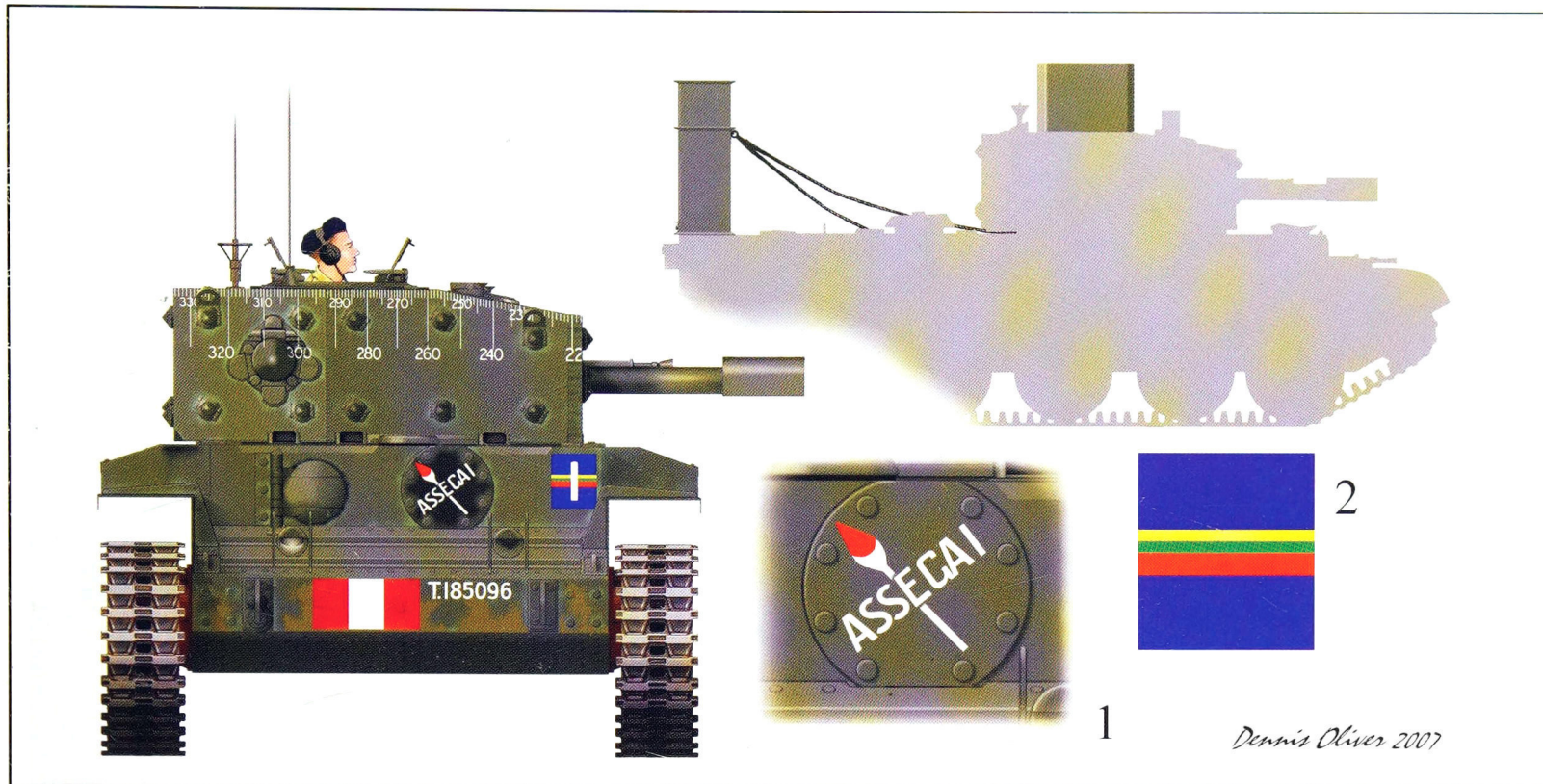
Sherman IIIs carry men of 3rd Infantry Division forward for the start of Operation Goodwood. On the nearest tank the name ARGYLE can be seen on the appliqué armour towards the front of the hull. On the rear of the second tank the unit serial number 53 is just visible. These Shermans may belong to the East Riding Yeomanry, the junior regiment of 27th Armoured Brigade. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7519)



Sherman tanks carrying infantry, a Sherman Crab flail tank, and an ambulance M5 Halftrack assemble at the start of Operation Goodwood. The arrangement of the stowage and style of lettering used for the WD Number on the Firefly are similar to those seen on tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry. Note that the muzzle brake on the Firefly is fixed at a very strange angle. The .50 cal machine gun of the Crab has been replaced with a 2 inch bomb thrower and visible on the hull are the periscope covers. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7521)



A heavily camouflaged Sherman VC Firefly followed by a Cromwell after crossing 'London Bridge' over the Orne River during Operation Goodwood. These tanks have been identified as belonging to various units in the past - most often one of the Guards Regiments. However, the Royal Tank Regiment cap badge worn by the crew of the Firefly and the 7th Armoured Division formation badge just visible on the uniform of the Cromwell commander indicate that this is either 1st or 5th RTR. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7527)



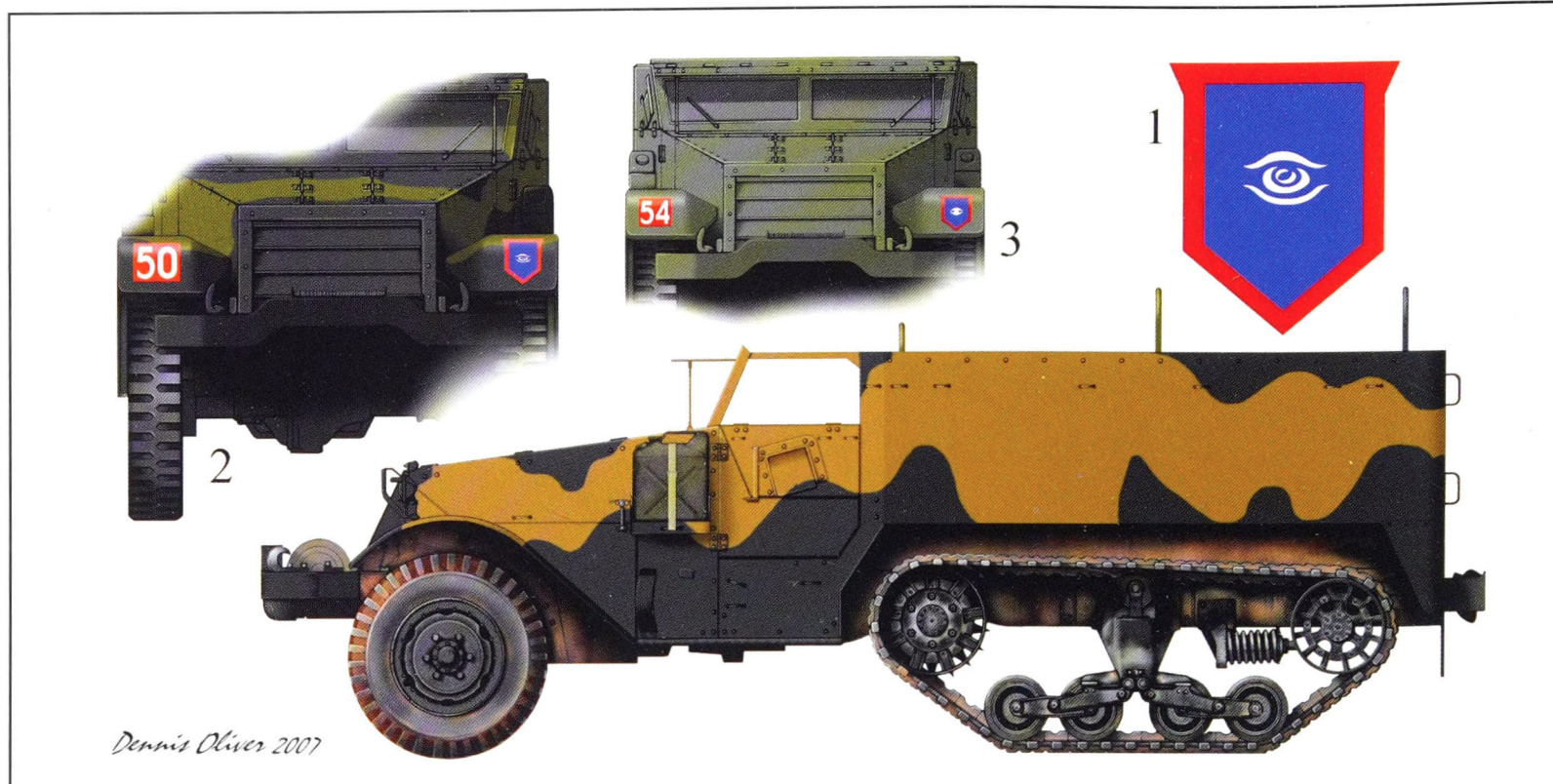
Centaur IV, 1st Battery, Royal Marine Armoured Support Group, England, March 1944

There has been some debate over the colour of the RM Centaurs with both SCC2 and SCC15 Olive Drab being put forward as the two most likely candidates. The former, described as a rich dark brown with a hint of khaki, was the standard base colour applied to vehicles until replaced by the latter in April 1944. The Centaurs were taken from storage to be issued to the Marines in early 1944 and this would seem to strengthen the case for SCC2. However, the colour photograph on which this illustration is based appears to show a roughly applied coat of SCC15 with patches of SCC2 showing through on the hull front. This suggests that at least some of these vehicles were given a coat of the new colour in April or May. The system of names used on these vehicles is discussed further in the introduction, and this tank's name ASSECAI, is shown here (1). Note that the yellow and green strips on the AoS square (2) are exactly half the width of the red strip and not the same as is usually shown. Also shown are the wading stacks fitted to the turret and exhaust.



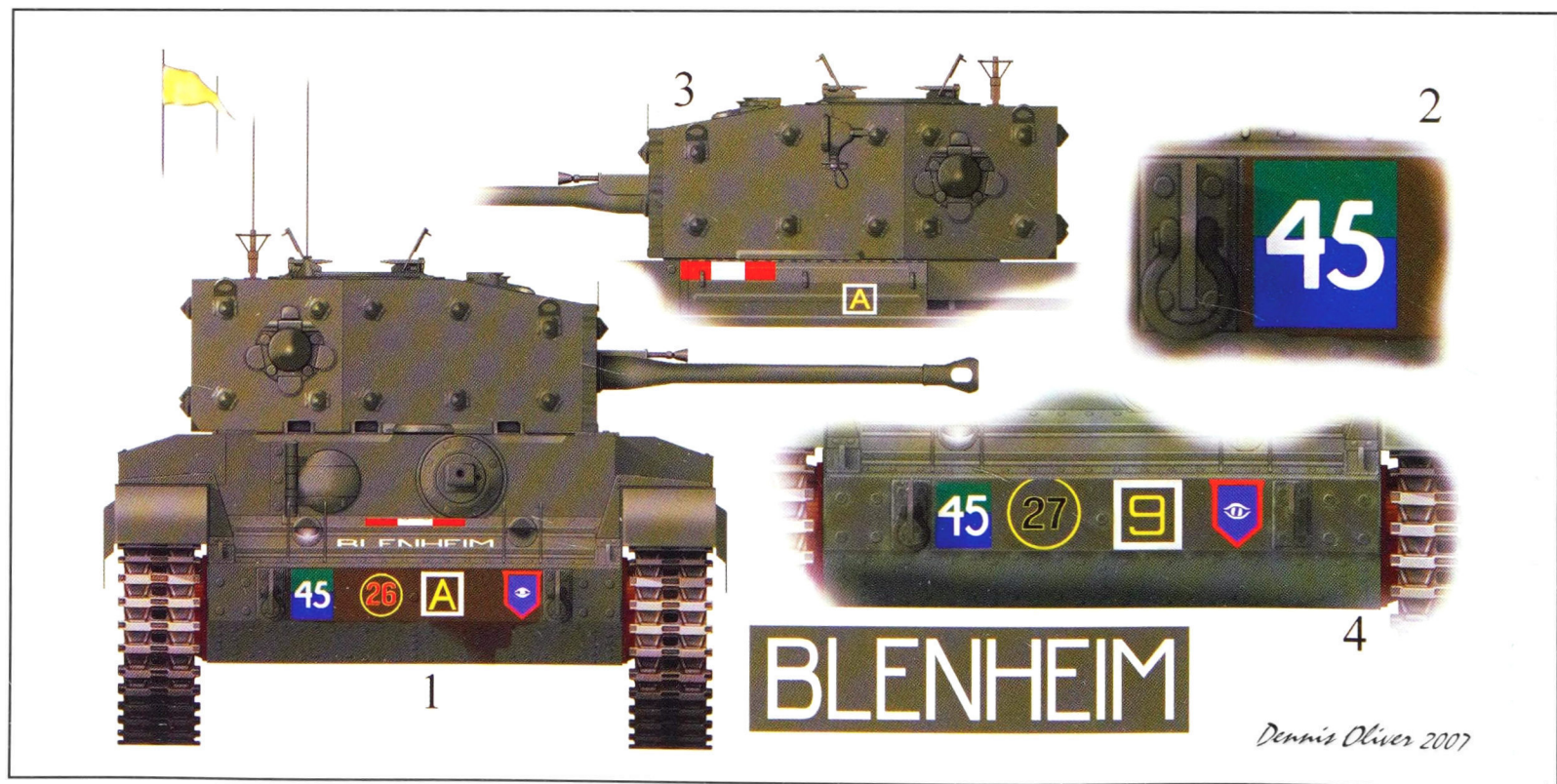
Centaur IV, 3rd Battery, Royal Marine Armoured Support Group, England, March 1944

This Centaur is shown in a base coat of SCC2, although SCC15 is possible as discussed above, the assumption here being that vehicles with early features are more likely to have used the earlier colour. The name "SEAWOLF" has been painted on the right side of the hull front (1) and the 3rd Battery AoS sign can be seen on the right mudguard (2). The placement of these markings differed between units, as did the style of lettering – as shown here (3) by this vehicle of 4th Battery. Of note is the extension fitted to the turret periscope in front of the commander's cupola and the calibrations painted on the turret – a feature common to all the RM tanks (this latter is discussed further in the photograph section). Waterproofing and wading stacks can be seen on some vehicles, but as the only evidence for this is photographic, it is difficult to determine if the practice was universal.



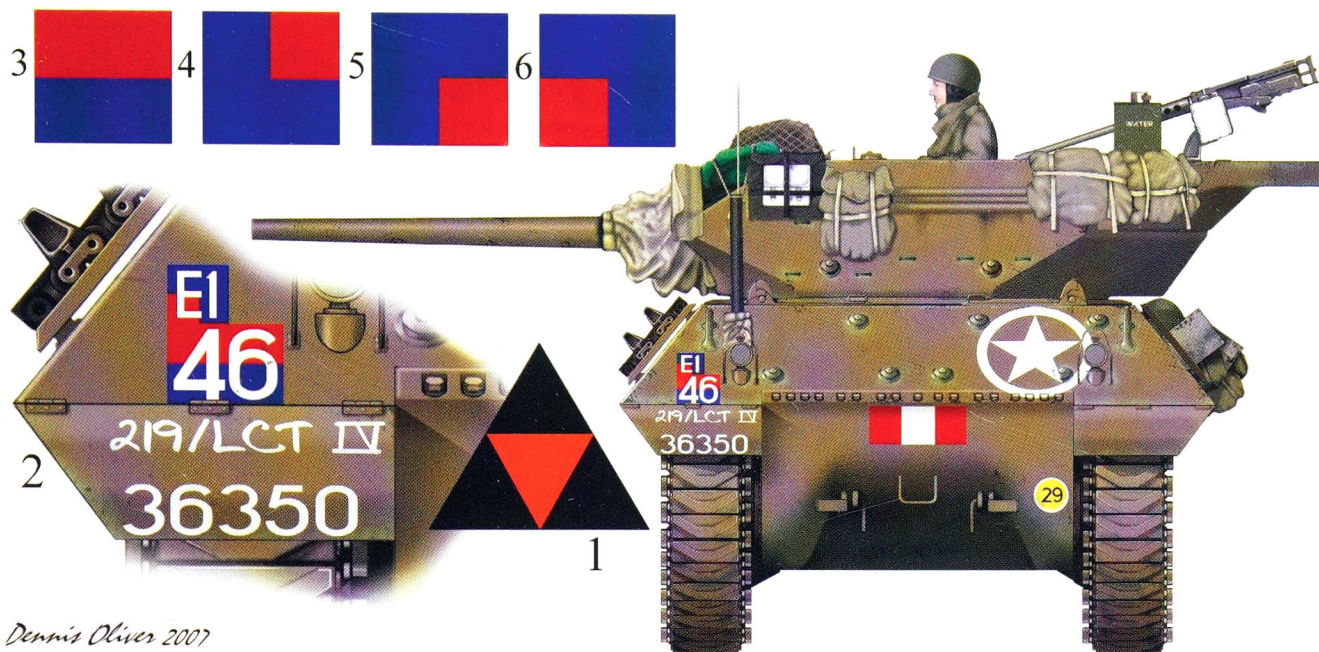
M5 Halftrack, 5th Guards Armoured Brigade, England, May 1944

This M5 Halftrack was photographed at a parade of the Guards Armoured Division in the weeks prior to D-Day and shows the standard vehicle camouflage in use from mid-1942 until the introduction of SCC15 Olive Drab in April 1944. The base coat of SCC2 has been broken up by a disruptive pattern of SCC14 Black as stipulated in an Army Council Instruction of October 1943. The Guards formation badge (1) and AoS sign identifying the brigade HQ – a white number 50 on a red square – were carried on the front mudguards (2). The introduction of Olive Drab was intended to eliminate the need to repaint US Lend Lease equipment – although the British version tended to fade to a greener shade. A halftrack of the 1st Grenadier Guards, the motor battalion of the brigade, is shown here in the new colour (3). Note that although the AoS sign and formation badge are worn in identical locations, they are both smaller than the versions seen on (1). Note that the headlights have been omitted from both front views for the sake of clarity.



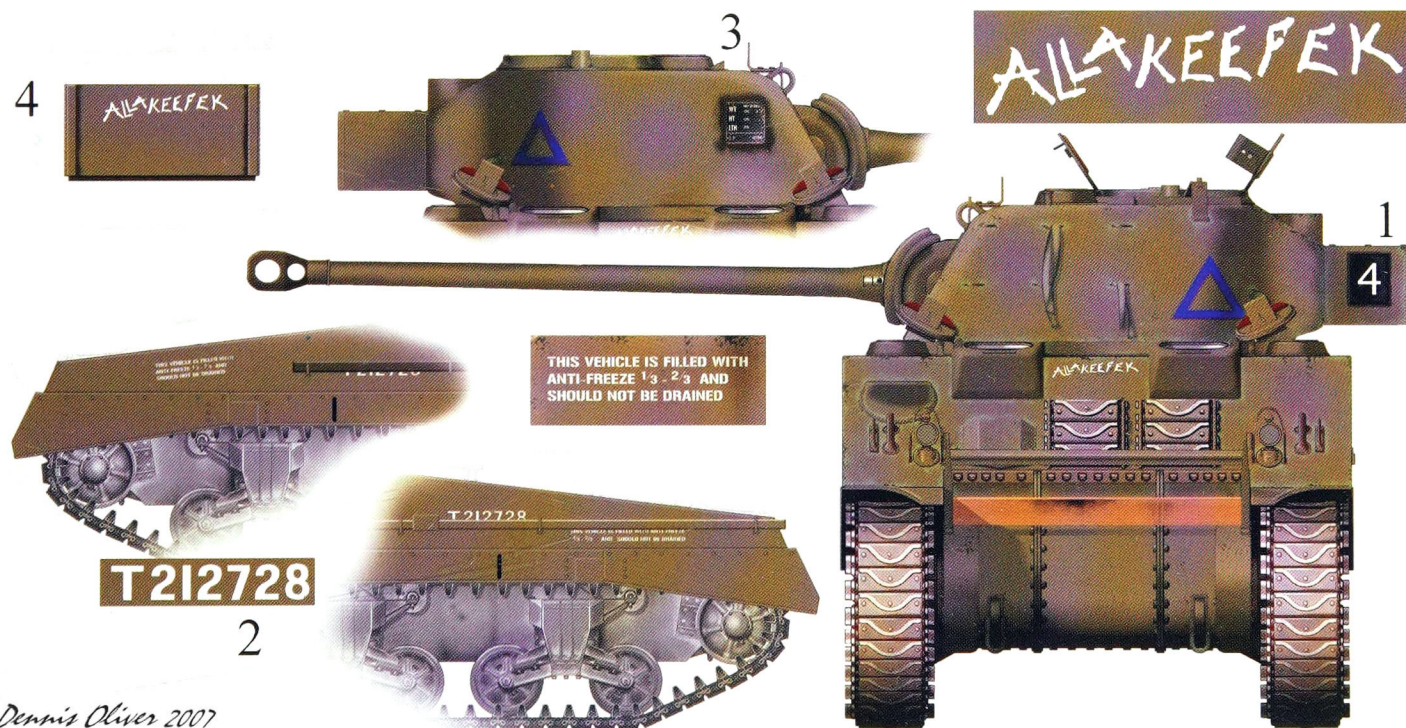
Cromwell IV, 2nd Armoured Welsh Guards, April 1944

This Cromwell IV, named BLENHEIM, was photographed during an inspection of the Guards Armoured Division by Prime Minister Churchill prior to D-Day. The squadron sign, in white for an un-brigaded regiment, can be seen on the hull front (1). Enclosed in that is a letter A – presumably identifying the squadron commander – in a slightly darker colour, possibly yellow. Also shown are the bridge classification marking, the Guards formation badge and the AoS sign of a white 45 on a green over blue square, identifying the armoured recce regiment of an armoured division (2). The squadron sign and red/white/red recognition marking are repeated on the hull stowage box. (3). Coloured pennants were flown from the tank's wireless aerial during the inspection but it is unlikely that they were used in France. A photograph taken in July 1944 of three of this regiment's Cromwells would suggest that the names and recognition markings were removed (4), probably in April when the latter was replaced by the white Allied star.



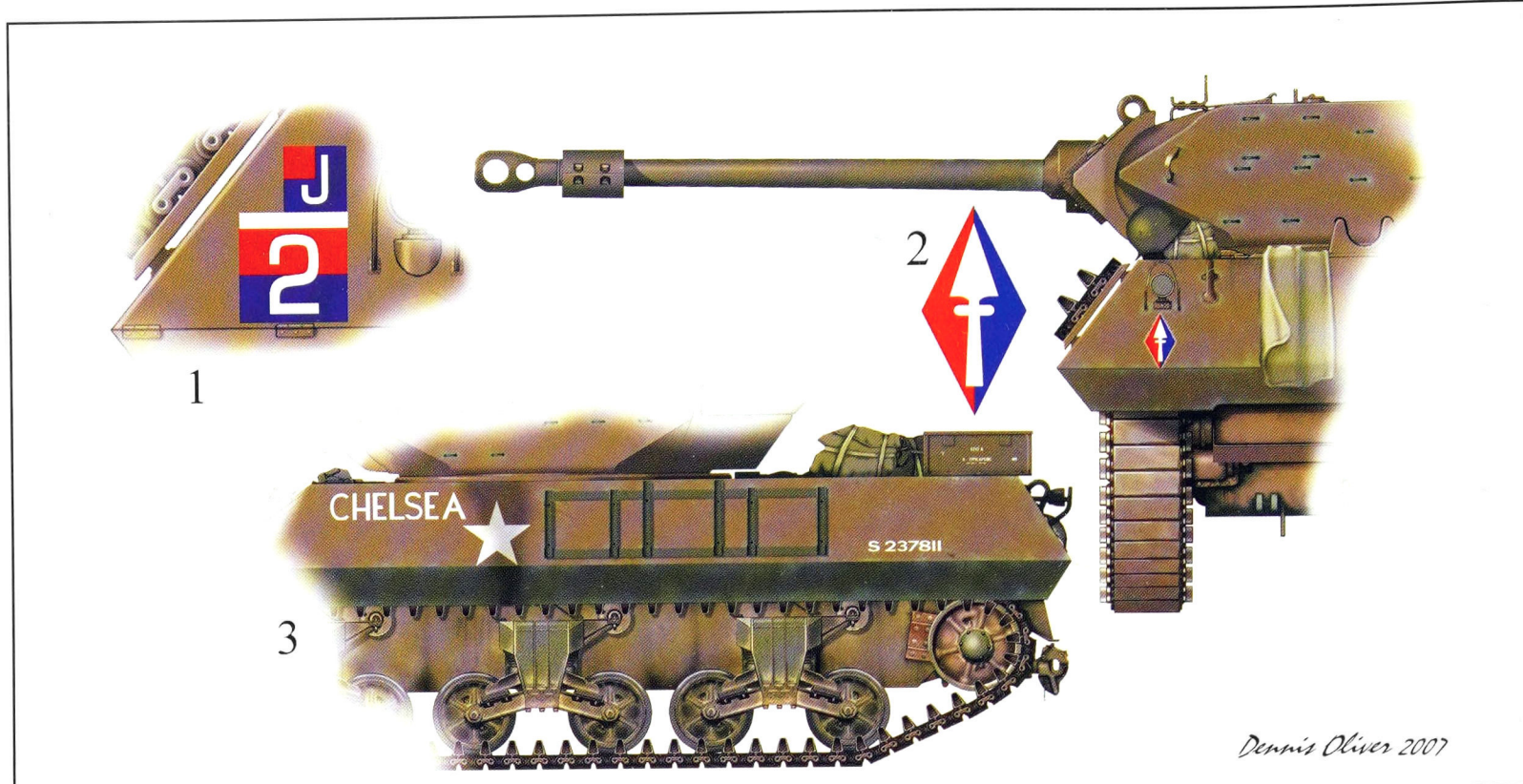
M10 Wolverine, 20th Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery, Normandy, 6 June 1944

Photographed on Sword Beach during the first hours of D-Day, this vehicle has in the past been described as belonging to various regiments, however it's identification as the anti-tank regiment of 3rd Infantry Division is beyond doubt. At the centre of the transmission cover can be seen the red/white/red recognition sign which although outdated, seems to have been common on vehicles of this regiment. Above that is the Allied white star which was intended to replace the former recognition sign in April 1944. The division's formation badge (1) was probably painted to the right of the star but is not visible in the photograph on which this illustration is based. The AoS sign identifying an infantry division's anti-tank regiment and RA tactical sign denoting the 3rd battery (2) can be seen on the hull front above the temporary shipping information. The complex system of RA tactical markings is beyond the scope of this book, however basic examples are shown here as: (3) RHQ; (4) 1st battery; (5) 2nd battery; (6) 3rd battery.



Sherman VC Firefly, 4th County of London Yeomanry, Normandy, June 1944

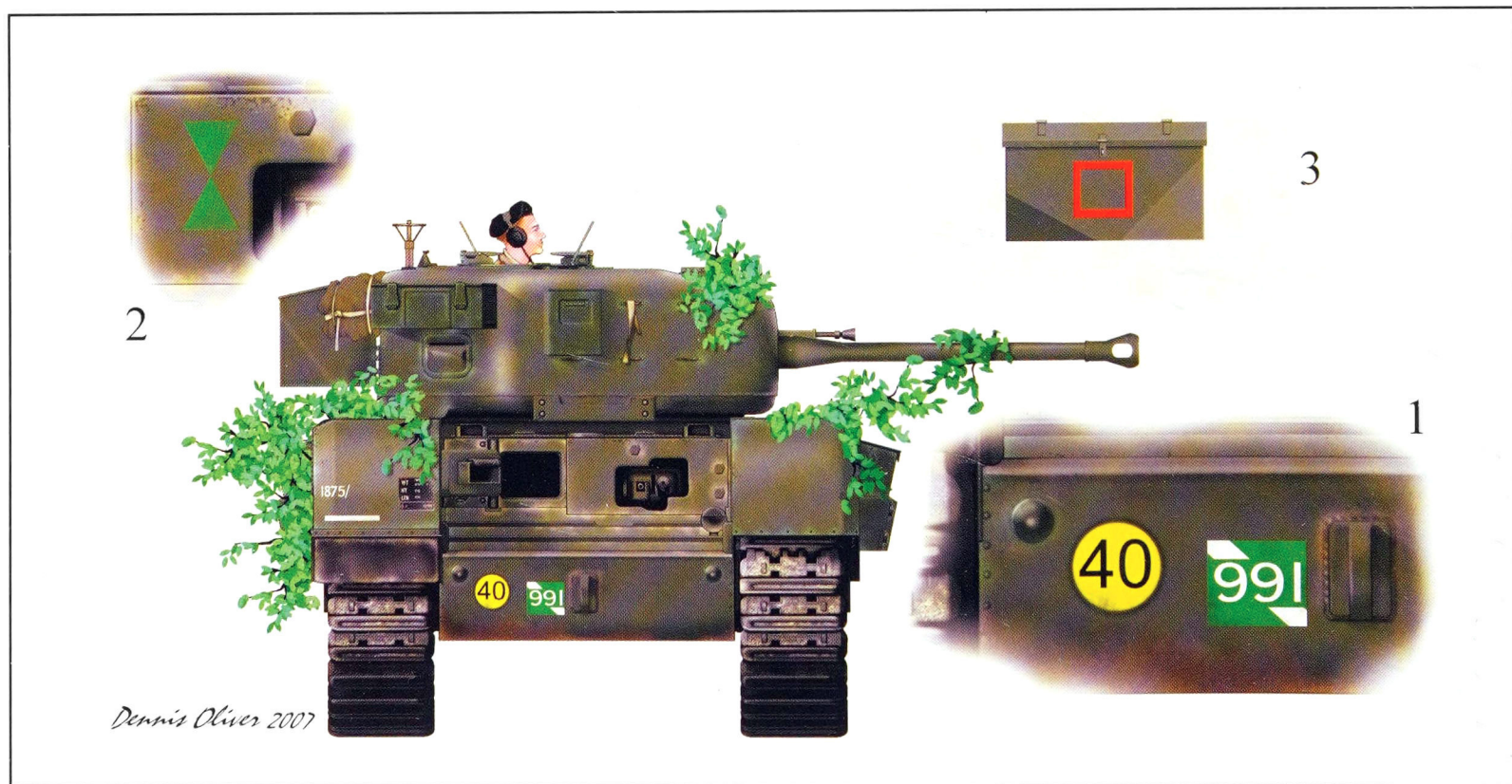
This Sherman VC Firefly of 4 Troop, A Squadron, was disabled at Villers-Bocage and subsequently photographed by the Germans. The number identifying the troop (1) appears to have been painted onto some kind of fabric and fixed to one side of the armoured extension at the rear of the turret. It is probable that the troop number was displayed elsewhere but become detached. Metal rails on either side of the hull obscure the anti-freeze warning and the WD Number (2), both of which have been enlarged here. The squadron sign can be seen on the turret sides, in blue indicating the junior regiment of the brigade, and also the shipping data label (3), showing the vehicle's weight, height, length and width. The name ALLAKEEFK, is painted on the rear of the turret extension (4) and repeated on the hull front. The series of photographs on which this illustration was based show clearly that no formation badge or AoS sign were carried - although this has, in the past, been depicted on the rear of the sandshields.



Dennis Oliver 2007

17 pdr Achilles, 62nd Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery, Normandy, late June 1944

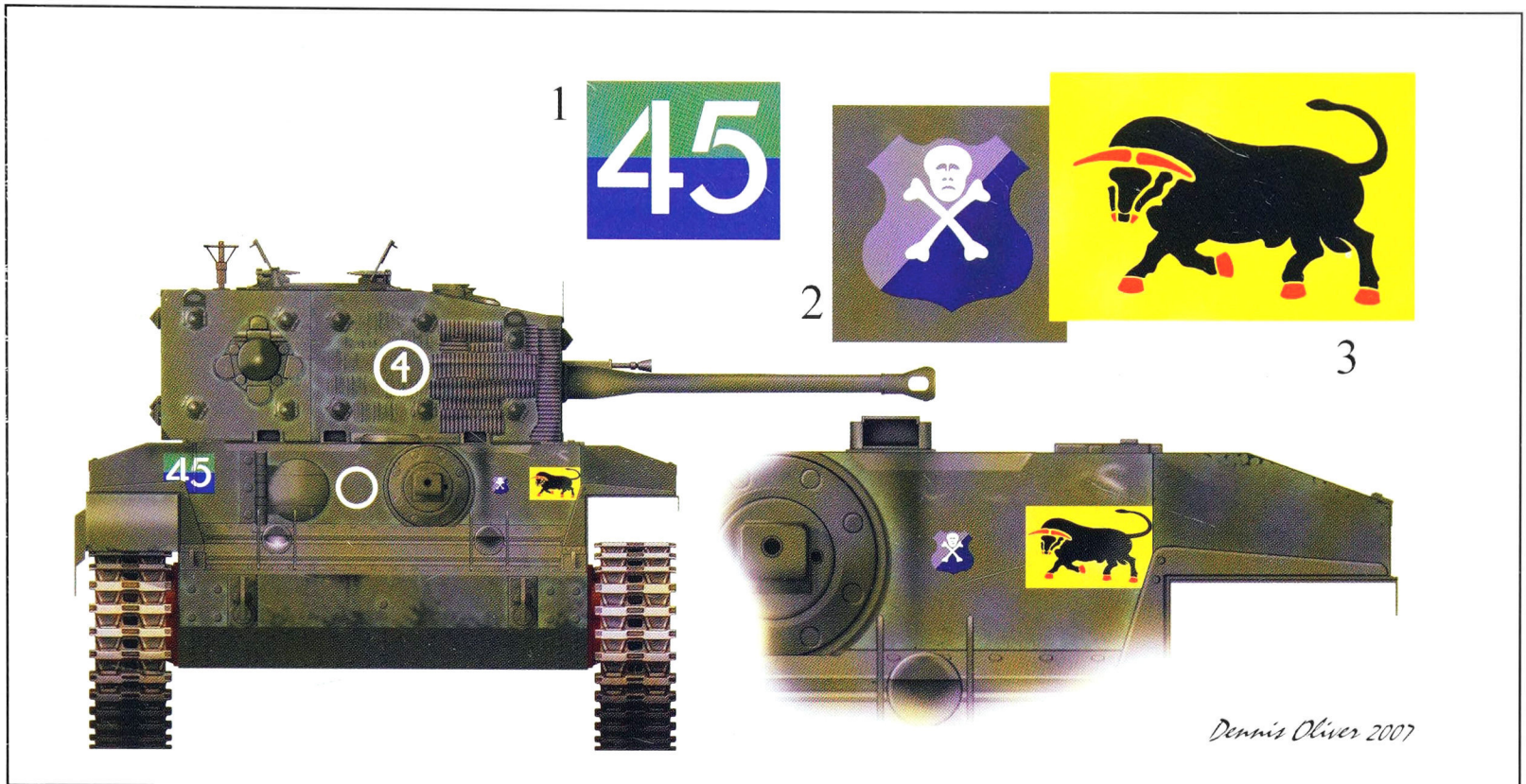
Based on a photograph published in a German wartime magazine, this Achilles 17pdr Tank Destroyer has only recently been identified as belonging to J Troop, 248 Battery, 62nd Anti-Tank Regiment by a surviving crewmember, Mr Walter Shea. The vehicle was disabled at Evrecy, near Caen and captured by the Germans. Fortunately the crew managed to escape unharmed. This regiment was attached to I Corps and although the AoS sign is not visible in the photograph, it is shown here (1) as it was worn on similar vehicles. The RA tactical sign shown above that is also somewhat conjectural but is correct for the 4th battery of an artillery regiment and the use of the troop letter by other vehicles is confirmed by photographs. The I Corps formation badge (2) is shown here as it was worn by attached artillery units - halved red and blue - and is clearly visible in the photograph. The vehicle's name, CHELSEA (3), is incidentally, where Mr Shea resides today.



Dennis Oliver 2007

Churchill IV, 7th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, Normandy, June 1944

This battalion formed part of 31st Tank Brigade and the AoS sign, a white 991 on a green square can be seen at the hull front (1) of this Churchill IV, next to the bridging classification marking. Note the white diagonal bar added to the AoS sign denoting troops controlled at army group level. The brigade's green 'Daibolo' formation badge (2) was carried by some tanks - usually in the position shown here - next to the hull machine gun. Photographs of other tanks of this regiment show that squadron signs were painted on the rear of the blanket box (3), in red for the senior regiment. Of note are the ammunition boxes welded to the turret side. This battalion was reconstituted from 10th RTR in April 1943 and continued that regiment's practice of naming its tanks with the letter J, one known example being Jinx, the CO's scout car. The use of foliage as camouflage was a common practice in Normandy. This vehicle is also shown in the photograph section.



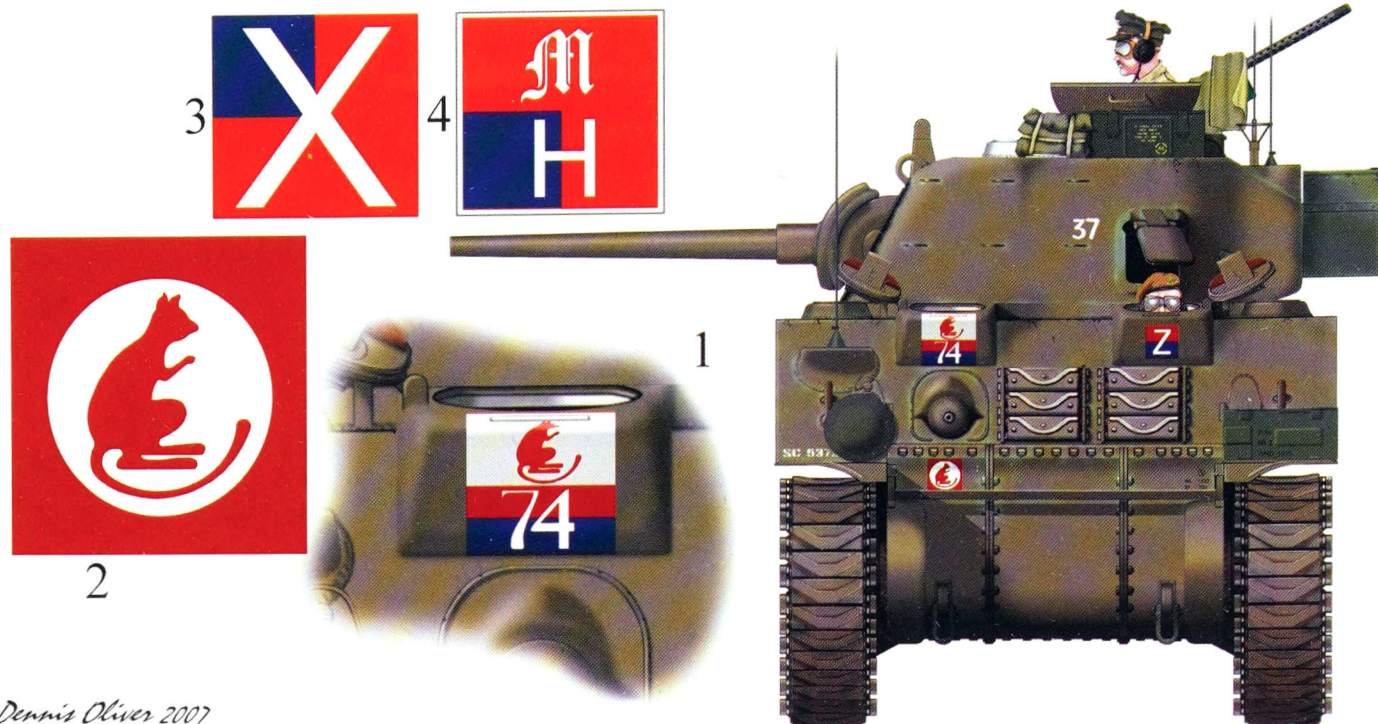
Cromwell IV, 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, France, July 1944

The application of strips of rubber to the tanks of this regiment is discussed further in the photograph section and can be seen on the Cromwell IV shown here. The rubber strips were most commonly affixed to the turret front, sides and rear – usually avoiding the bolt heads – and the hull front, although no two tanks seem to have had the same style of application. Squadron signs were carried on the turret – often painted over the rubber strips – and at the hull front, in white. The AoS sign (1) identifying the armoured recce regiment of an armoured division can be seen to the left of the diver's position. Also of note is the piratical coat of arms (2), painted next to the 11th Armoured Division formation badge (3). The colours shown here are purely conjectural – dark and light blue being representative of the Northants Yeomanry. Many of the tanks of this regiment were named - although the vehicle shown here is not - two examples being Galahad and Agamemnon, both of C Squadron.



Sherman III, 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards, France, July 1944

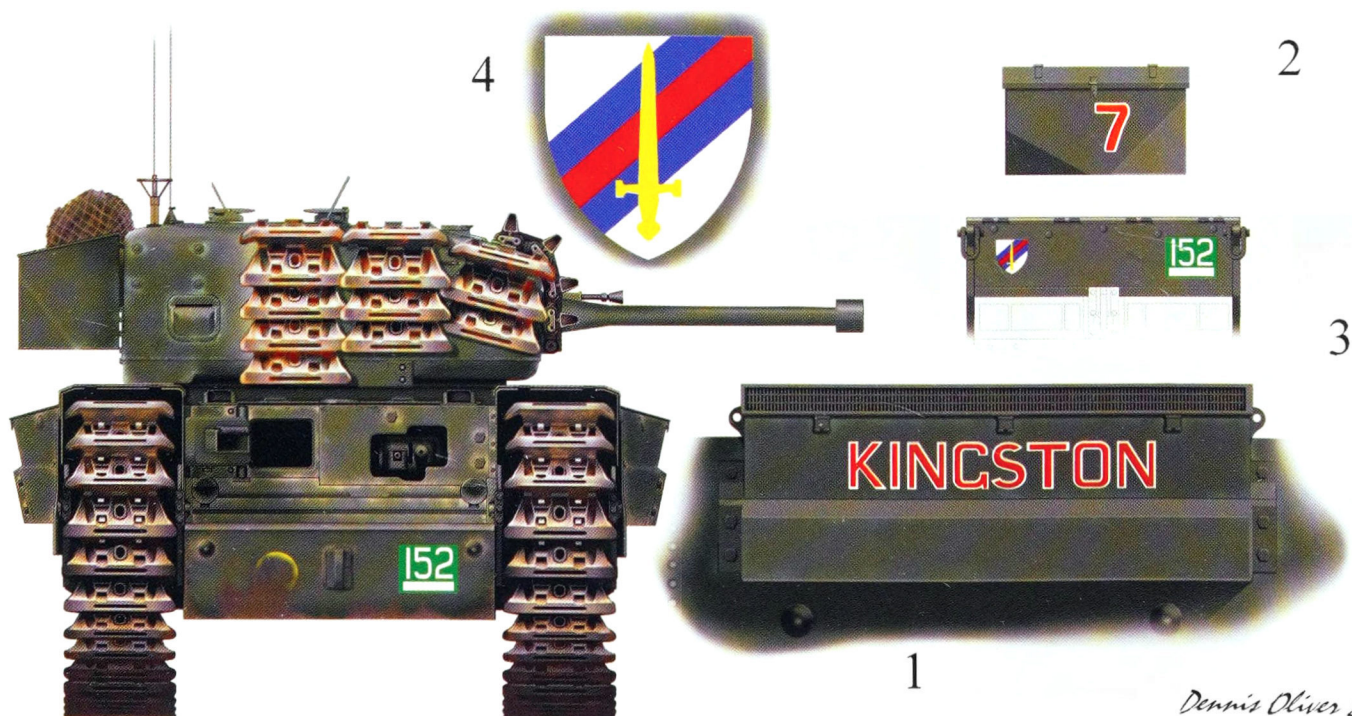
Photographic evidence would suggest that the large turret numbers seen here were not used by all the tanks of this regiment and the significance of the system is not known at this time. These large red numbers, outlined in white have in fact have caused some vehicles to be incorrectly described as belonging to 13th/18th Hussars. The identification of these Sherman IIIs is however beyond doubt - the composite 8th Armoured Brigade formation badge and AoS sign (1), being clearly visible on the rear hull (2). Note that the white bar used to indicate army troops has been rendered as a thin white line under the unit serial number 994 – a practice common throughout the brigade. The regiment's tanks were named – largely at the discretion of the commander and known examples are Bath, Hereford and Exeter – all of A Squadron. One of the vehicles shown here (3) has no less than three names: DINGAAN, painted on the hull side; DORA, on the turret, and; KATH, barely visible on the barrel of the 75mm gun.



Dennis Oliver 2007

Sherman V, 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, France, July 1944

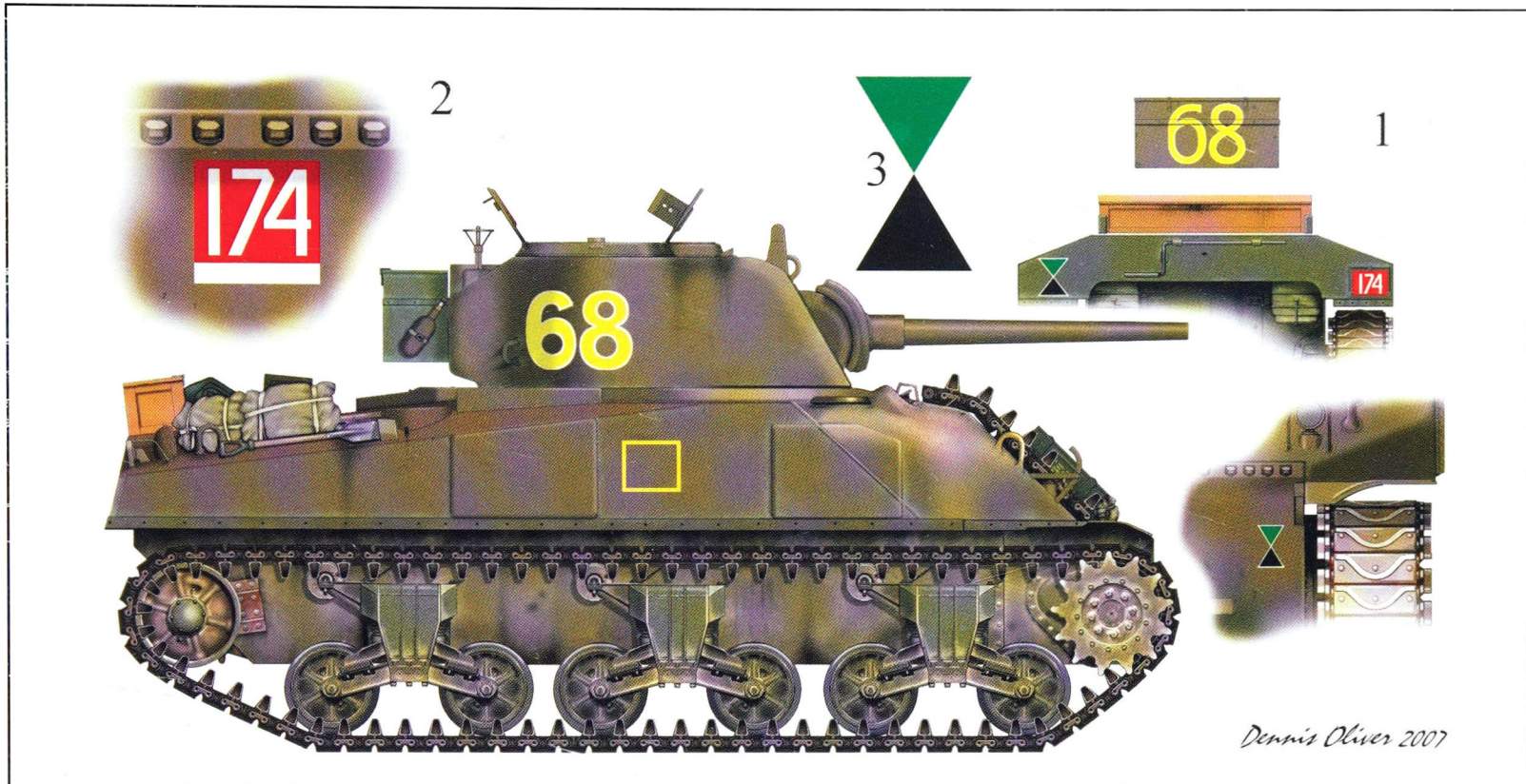
This unit was the senior field artillery regiment of 7th Armoured Division and the Sherman V shown here carries the combined AoS sign (1) of a white 74 on a red over blue square and the division's famous formation badge (2). Note that the latter has been repeated on the transmission cover. The significance of the white number 37 on the turret side is not known. Note also that a large area of the turret roof has been painted white, only the ventilator being visible from this angle. The Royal Artillery employed a system of tactical signs to identify units within a regiment and that seen in front of the driver's position represents the regiment's CO. Others shown here are: (3) Battery commander, 4th battery, and; (4) M Battery, 3rd RHA, battery command post. The use of the Gothic style letters to denote batteries was peculiar to this regiment. Not shown in this illustration, but visible in the photograph on which it was based, is the foul weather hood erected over the driver's hatch.



Dennis Oliver 2007

Churchill IV, 4th Battalion Grenadier Guards, France, late 1944

All the tanks of this regiment, including the Stuarts of the recce troop, were named after English towns. The names used by the battalion HQ began with the letter W. The tanks of No.1 Squadron used D for the squadron HQ, with A-F being used for Troops 1-5 respectively. In No.2 Squadron the HQ used N and Troops 6-10 used the letters F, K, G, H and Y. In No.3 Squadron the letter M was used by the HQ and P, S, L, O and T were used by Troops 11-15. The Churchill IV seen here has the name KINGSTON (1) painted in red letters outlined in white on the air intake - identifying 7 Troop, No.2 Squadron. Note that the troop number has also been painted on the rear of the turret stowage box (2). On the rear hull (3) can be seen the brigade's colourful formation badge (4) and the AoS sign identifying the senior regiment of 6th Guards Tank brigade. Tanks of this regiment are also shown in the photograph section.



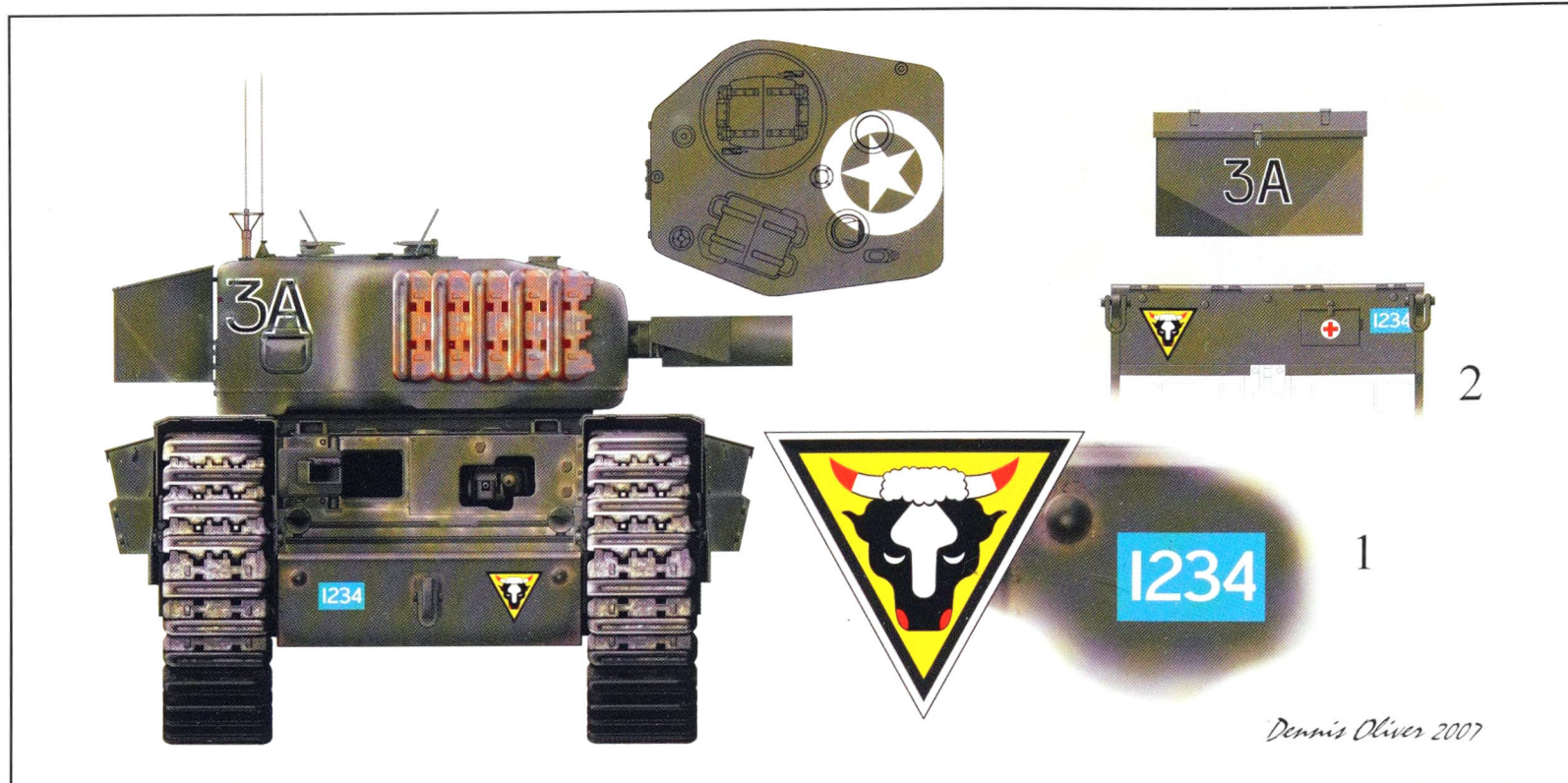
Sherman I, 144th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps, France, August 1944

The regiments of 33rd Armoured Brigade used large two digit call signs painted onto the turrets of their tanks as a means of identification - the colour of these numbers is most often given as white. However, a close examination using original prints of the available photographs shows clearly that the numbers are a slightly darker shade than the white outline and are shown here in the yellow of a second senior regiment. It has in fact been suggested that the other regiments - 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry and 148th RAC - may have used red and blue numbers respectively, also outlined in white. Note that the number 68 seen on the turret of this Sherman I, is repeated on the rear of the blanket box (1) in a very different lettering style. The AoS sign (2) shown here has the white bar identifying troops controlled at army level, however it appears that it was not used by the tanks of this regiment, a plain red square being utilised instead. Also shown is the brigade's formation badge (3).



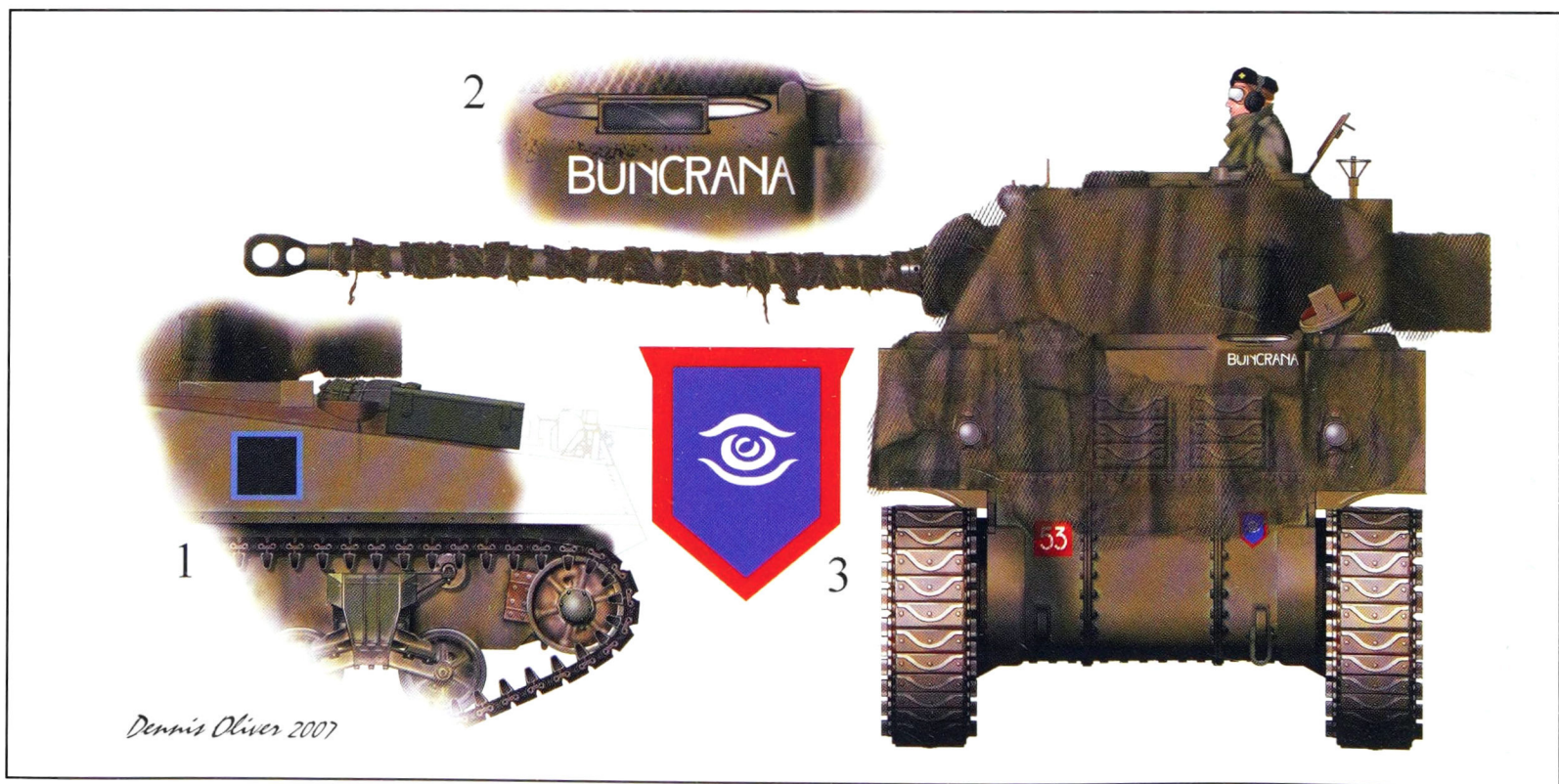
Cromwell IV, HQ 22nd Armoured Brigade, France, August 1944

The appearance of this tank - and the placement of its markings - is typical of the brigade's Cromwells at this time. The composite formation badge and AoS sign (1) of a white 50 on a red square, identify the brigade HQ. The regiments of this brigade - 5th Dragoon Guards 1st RTR and 5th RTR - used 51, 52 and 53 respectively. The motor battalion, 1st Rifle Brigade, used 54. This system was in fact common to all the armoured divisions. The 7th Armoured Division formation badge (2) can be seen on the right of the hull front. The WD Number, T187687, may have been repeated on the turret side as shown here (3), but is not visible in the photograph used to create this illustration. The Allied white star recognition sign was commonly applied to the turret roof on Cromwells (4) and on this vehicle is repeated on the stowage box on the hull side (5). Various types of applied camouflage were commonly used in France, that shown here being made up of strips of hessian cloth.



Churchill AVRE, 6th Assault Regiment, RE, France, late 1944

The regiments of 1st Assault Brigade were drawn from the Royal Engineers and as such, unit serial numbers were carried on cobalt blue squares (1). The numbers used by this brigade were 1232, 1233, 1234 and 1235 for brigade HQ, 5th Assault Regiment, 6th Assault Regiment and 42nd Assault Regiment respectively. The 79th Armoured Division formation badge and AoS signs are not visible in the photograph on which this illustration is based but were carried by most - if not all - of the division's tanks in the positions shown here (2). The turret call signs were determined with the initial landings in mind with the number indicating which team or lane the tank was assigned to and the letter indicating the device carried - for example A being a Log Carpet, B indicating a SBG Bridge and C denoting a Bobbin. Although the numbers used by this regiment are usually depicted as red with a white outline, those seen in our photograph seem to be in a very dark shade and are rendered here as black and white.



Sherman VC Firefly, 2nd Battalion Irish Guards, Holland, September 1944

Photographed crossing the road bridge at Nijmegen, the hull and turret of this Sherman VC Firefly are almost completely covered with camouflage netting, with scraps of hessian used to conceal the 17pdr barrel. The Irish Guards were the junior regiment of 5th Guards Armoured Brigade and as such their squadron signs were blue (1), the example shown here having a decidedly darker centre. In common with most tanks of this battalion, an ammunition case has been welded to the hull to provide extra stowage. All tanks were named after Irish towns and villages (2), the names beginning with A for No.1 Squadron, B for No.2 Squadron and C for No.3 Squadron. A few known examples are Ardnacrush, Ardmore, Black Sod, Bantry, Clochan, Cloneen and - shown here - Bunrana. The battalion HQ tanks were named St. Patrick - for the CO - Ulster, Leinster and Connaught. The AoS sign of a white 53 on a red square, denoting the junior regiment, and the Guards formation badge (3), are both visible on the transmission cover.

A Morris Light Reconnaissance Car, WD Number M5204655, follows Sherman Crab flail tanks of 30th Armoured Brigade immediately prior to the start of Operation Goodwood. Just visible above the AoS sign is the deliberately obscured formation badge of 3rd Infantry Division, identifying the unit as 17th Field Company, RE. The colour of the AoS sign is the Engineer's cobalt blue. Note the disruptive camouflage visible on the commander's turret. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7540)



A Sherman VC Firefly of B Squadron, Staffordshire Yeomanry carrying infantry during Operation Goodwood. Barely visible below the WD Number T212680, is the name BELVEDERE, probably outlined in the regiment's colour of yellow. At the centre of the transmission cover can be seen the squadron marking over the AoS sign for the second senior regiment of an armoured brigade. To the left of this the bridging classification seems to have been recorded twice, albeit in different styles. In July 1944, 27th Armoured Brigade was disbanded and this vehicle was passed to C Squadron, 25th Canadian Armoured Delivery Regiment on 1 Aug 1944. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7557)

Two Stuart III light tanks followed by a turretless recce tank move up towards Escoville during Operation Goodwood. The only markings carried are the Allied recognition star on the turret roof and the WD Number on the hull side. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7560)



A Sexton II 25pdr self-propelled gun of 5th Royal Horse Artillery, 7th Armoured Division passes a lorry of 3rd Infantry Division near Escoville during Operation Goodwood. The Sexton has the name BUBBLES III painted onto the right mudguard and THE GOON just below the driver's open hatch. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7565)



Cromwell tanks of 2nd Welsh Guards - the Guards Division formation badge visible at the left of the hull rear - moving across 'York Bridge' over the Caen Canal and the Orne River, during Operation Goodwood. Note the large C Squadron sign enclosing the number 14 just to the right of the formation badge. The number 46 seen next to the right mudguard, is not an unusual unit serial number as is sometimes claimed, but rather part of the vehicle's WD Number. Although difficult to read, the number is probably T189490/46. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7656)



Infantrymen watch as a Churchill IV, its turret heavily camouflaged, moves up for a dawn attack towards Evrecy. 16 July 1944. (IWM B7586)



The commanding officer of B Squadron, 107th Regiment RAC, Lieutenant J. Fathergill in the turret of his Churchill VII. This unit was formed in 1941 from 5th Battalion, The King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster) and at this time formed part of 34th Tank Brigade. At least one source states that the cap badge as worn on the RAC beret was a white metal version of the bronze infantry badge. 17 July 1944. (IWM B7601)



Taken from the same sequence as B7601, this photograph shows Trooper E. McGuinness, the gunner of Lt. Fathergill's Churchill VII, touching up the name BRITON on the tank's air intake. Those readers who doubt that Trooper McGuinness actually used the brush seen here may wish to compare this photograph with B6525 which was taken by a photographer of the same Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU). 17 July 1944. (IWM B7620)



Lt. Fathergill with two members of his tank's crew stripping and cleaning the Besa hull machine gun. What may have been a large B Squadron sign on the turret side has been roughly painted over leaving a pennant shaped sign, the significance of which is unknown. There is also evidence of some kind of marking on the side of the blanket box, however it is largely obscured by one of the crewmen. All these markings are in a very light colour, probably yellow. 17 July 1944. (IWM B7624)

Lt. Fathergill, with the hull machine gunner (nearest the camera) and loader of his Churchill VII. Note the method of attaching the camouflage netting to the turret, fitted after photo B7624 was taken. This is an early MkVII without the prominent 'bulge' on either side of the main gun aperture. 17 July 1944. (IWM B7635)



A rear view of Lt. Fathergill's Churchill VII, BRITON, as it follows the rest of B Squadron, 107th RAC. Each tank carries a light coloured square plate with a dark, probably black, number attached to the rear of the blanket box. Of special interest are the markings on the rear hull, deliberately covered with a coat of mud. The unusual order of precedence used by this brigade is discussed further in the text. 17 July 1944. (IWM B7637)

An early Churchill VII of B Squadron - the squadron sign visible on the muzzle cover on the nearest tank in the original photo - 107th Regiment RAC, 34th Tank Brigade. In common with other tanks of this regiment, a name probably beginning with the squadron letter but unfortunately illegible, is painted on the air intake. 17 July 1944. (IWM B7638)



A Churchill IV of 34th Tank Brigade - note the crudely painted 2nd Army formation badge to the left of the hull machine gun - previously identified as B Squadron, 107th RAC. This tank is probably from 153rd Regiment, RAC, whose cap badge the two crewmen appear to be wearing. 17 July 1944. (IWM B7641)



Cromwell tanks of No. 2 Squadron, 2nd Welsh Guards advancing towards Escoville during Operation Goodwood. Of note is the camouflage on the turret and the sandbags placed on the front of the hull as extra protection. The markings of this regiment are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7562)



Taken from the same sequence as B7562, Cromwell tanks pass a Sherman on the road to Escoville during Operation Goodwood. These vehicles have been previously identified as 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, however they are almost certainly from 2nd Welsh Guards, the armoured recce regiment of Guards Armoured Division. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7563)



A Cromwell command tank - note the bracket used for holding maps and other papers attached to the hatch of the commander's cupola - of 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Division, waits by the roadside during Operation Goodwood. The three heavily camouflaged vehicles immediately behind the Cromwell are M10 tank destroyers, probably from 65th (Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7647)



Taken from the same sequence as B7647, this photograph was shot from a position behind the M10s seen in that photo. Although heavily camouflaged with local foliage, the uniform details of the crew identify this Cromwell as belonging to 4th County of London Yeomanry. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7649)



A column of Cromwell tanks moving forward, south-east of Caen. Previously identified as 2nd Welsh Guards, these tanks are indeed from an armoured recon regiment as can be seen by the worn and barely visible unit serial number 45 to the left of the driver's visor. However, the cap badge worn by the crew of the nearest tank is that of 15th/19th King's Royal Hussars, which from 8 August was attached to 11th Armoured Division. 19 July 1944. (IWM B7740)

A Crusader AA tank mounting a triple Oerlikon gun in a hull-down position. Very few of these conversions were completed and all were previously thought to have been only used for training. However the background of this photo would seem distinctly Norman. 19 July 1944. (IWM B7738)



A Sherman V ARV Mk I of 3rd Infantry Division's 8th Infantry Brigade Workshop towing a captured German PzKpfw IV tank near Cagny. The brigade workshops were units of the Royal Engineers attached to infantry divisions. This Sherman can be identified by the blue over yellow over red AoS sign visible on the left mudguard, with a white unit serial number 88, the latter indicating that this workshop is attached to the senior brigade. The division's formation badge has been painted onto the stowage box welded to the transmission cover. 19 July 1944. (IWM B7762)



A Churchill IV in the shattered village of Maltot. In early July, 7th RTR and 9th RTR of 31st Tank Brigade suffered heavy casualties here in an attempt to capture Hill 112. Note the lengths of track taken from a German tank welded to the lower front hull. 26 July 1944. (IWM B8051)

Staghound Armoured Cars on patrol. The AoS sign of a corps armoured car regiment - a green over blue square with a white bar at the top and unit serial number 44 - can be seen on the nearest vehicle, just under the hull MG. These vehicles are in fact from II Canadian Corps, whose formation badge is just visible to the right of the bridge classification marking. 27 July 1944. (IWM B8114)



A Cromwell IV, WD Number T187687, of 7th Armoured Division. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 30 July 1944. (IWM B8183)



A mortar platoon carrier of 15th (Scottish) Division - the formation badge visible to the left of the mortar tube strapped to the rear of the carrier - passes a group of German prisoners being escorted by a military policeman on a motorcycle near Caumont-l'Éventé. 30 July 1944. (IWM B8188)



Taken from the same sequence as B8188, the crew of a Universal Carrier of 2nd Battalion, Glasgow Highlanders, 46th (Highland) Infantry Brigade of 15th (Scottish) Division watch an attack near Caumont-l'Éventé. 30 July 1944. (IWM B8198)



Achilles 17pdr tank destroyers with turrets reversed, move forward during the advance south of Caumont-l'Éventé. 31 July 1944. (IWM B8283)



Taken from the same sequence as B8283 and showing the same vehicles advancing along lanes cleared of mines and marked by white tape. 31 July 1944. (IWM B8284)



Cromwell tanks, Lloyd Carriers and a lone Sherman of 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Division pass a Humber Scout Car near Canteloup, south of Cahagnes. The nearest Cromwell has the name BETTY painted just above the driver's opened vision port. The Lloyd Carrier next in line carries the AoS sign of an armoured division's independent medium MG company, a white 64 on a black square combined with 7th Armoured's formation badge. 1 August 1944. (IWM B8369)



Cromwell tanks of 5th RTR, 22nd Armoured Brigade of 7th Armoured Division, prepare to engage the enemy during the advance towards Aunay-sur-Odon. The nearest vehicle is a Mk Vw – the designation indicating that this is one of the 123 Cromwells built with a welded hull. Although heavily camouflaged, the WD Number T121763W is visible. 1 August 1944. (IWM B8378)

Sherman VC Firefly tanks, Achilles 17pdr tank destroyers, trucks and infantry of 11th Armoured Division in the village of St. Charles-de-Percy during the advance to Vire. Note that the Firefly has a length of track from a German Tiger welded to the centre of the transmission cover. 2 August 1944. (IWM B8487)



Achilles 17pdr tank destroyers passing through Cahagnes during the advance towards Aunay-sur-Odon. The formation badge of 7th Armoured Division can be seen on the shoulders of two of the MPs in the centre of the photograph, and this may possibly identify the Achilles as belonging to 65th (Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA. 2 August 1944. (IWM B8507)



A Churchill IV of 4th Grenadier Guards, 6th Guards Tank Brigade carrying infantry of The Royal Scots Fusiliers, passes a destroyed German PzKpfw IV tank in Le Tourneur. The regiment's AoS sign of a white 152 on a green square with the bar indicating army troops can be seen at the front of the hull. 3 August 1944. (IWM B8553)

Taken from the same sequence as B8553, another Churchill IV of 4th Grenadier Guards supports infantrymen of The Royal Scots Fusiliers near St. Pierre-Tarentaine. In this view the brigade's formation badge is also visible on the left rear hull and a red No. 1 Squadron sign (the Guards did not use letters) enclosing a white troop number, has been painted onto the rear of the blanket box. Note that the turret is almost completely covered in lengths of spare track. 3 August 1944. (IWM B8555)



Also from the same sequence as B8553, these Churchill IVs are from 4th Grenadier Guards operating near St. Pierre-Tarentaine. The nearest vehicle has a name painted on the air intake which is for the most part indecipherable, but seems to begin with an F and end in LLY. A search of the names known to have been used by 6th Guards Tank Brigade has so far failed to find a match, and I would be grateful to hear from any reader who may have further information. 3 August 1944. (IWM B8566)



Also from the same sequence as B8553, this Churchill IV is named FULHAM, the name visible on the air intake. What was probably a large squadron sign on the turret side has been roughly overpainted - the troop number 5 is still visible. 3 August 1944. (IWM B8567)



taken from the same sequence as B8553, almost all identifying markings on this Churchill have been covered by a hasty coat of paint. A name is visible on the air intake but unfortunately it is not clear enough to be read. In an effort to compensate for the shortfall in deliveries of the newer Churchill VII, some Mk V tanks were equipped with the 75mm gun, as seen here. Tanks so converted were designated Mk VI. 3 August 1944. (IWM B8568)



Track repairs for a Churchill tank, the WD Number T251706/C visible on the hull front and side, in the Villers-Bocage area. In the background is a Churchill ARV, rarely seen in photographs. Of special note is the metal plate fixed over the main gun and Besa machine gun, presumably covering the gun aperture at the turret front. 4 August 1944. (IWM B8578)



Sherman II DD tanks move along a narrow lane towards Ondefontaine. The nearest vehicle features the later large hatch hull, while the following tank has the earlier small hatch hull. Both have had the canvas removed from their flotation screens. The only formation to operate DD tanks based on the Sherman II was 8th Armoured Brigade, which had 76 on hand for the invasion. A large C Squadron sign is visible on the turret side towards the front. Behind that can be seen a large number 2, almost certainly in the same colour. 4 August 1944. (IWM B8588)

An M10 tank destroyer followed by a Sherman tank, passes carriers and an M5 Halftrack on the Vassy road. The wearing of the US tanker's helmet by British crews, as seen on the driver here, was rare in North-Western Europe. 4 August 1944. (IWM B8604)



An M10 tank destroyer has its track repaired in Montcharivel. Although no identifying markings are visible on the vehicle, the insignia worn by the Lance Corporal at right identifies this unit as 91st (Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA attached to VIII Corps. Of note is the pair of improved hook type 'Simplex' jacks as seen in B5425 - visible on the end connectors just below the drive sprocket, as well as the hinged front fender. 5 August 1944. (IWM B8645)



A tank recovery unit works to extricate a Sherman II DD from a ditch. The DD conversions based on this variant were all grouped in 8th Armoured Brigade, and this photograph should be compared with B8588. Visible in the original photograph is an unusual hand painted recognition star on the turret roof. Note that the commander's hatch is missing. 6 August 1944. (IWM B8741)



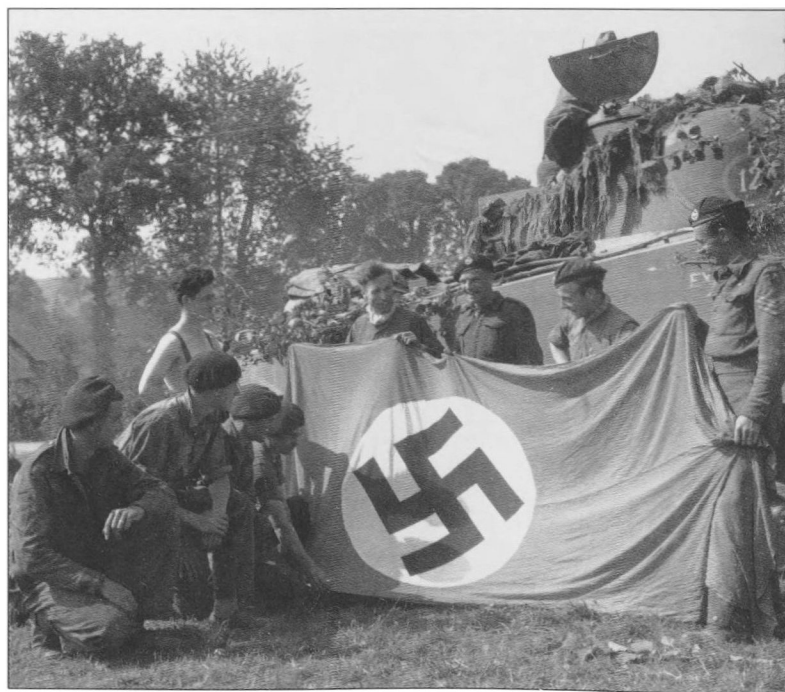
A Sherman Hybrid I drives past MPs of 3rd Infantry Division, and through a gap in a hedgerow near Aunay-sur-Odon. Note that the turret on this vehicle has no pistol port or blanket box. 4 August 1944. (IWM B8675)



Newly arrived Churchill AVREs of 6th Assault Regiment, 1st Assault Brigade, RE, pass camouflaged Sherman Vs while moving up through Vaucelles. The nearest tank is based on the MkIV, while those following are MkIIIs. Unlike the Churchills seen earlier in this book, these tanks display a full array of markings. On the left mudguard can be seen the regiment's AoS sign of a white 1234 on a cobalt blue square. Beneath that is the bridge classification marking and the mobilisation number. Next to the hull machine gun are two concentric circles, presumably in the yellow of the second senior regiment, enclosing what is probably a troop and individual tank number 3B, in white. On the turret roof is the regulation aerial recognition sign of a white, five-pointed star within a circle. On the right mudguard can be seen the 79th Armoured Division formation badge. 7 August 1944. (IWM B8774)



A troop commander of 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, 33rd Armoured Brigade gives orders to his tank commanders by the side of a Sherman tank - officially captioned as a Firefly. Note the name LILLINGSTONE painted above the appliqué armour. 7 August 1944. (IWM B8798)



The crew of a Sherman Firefly of 1st RTR - note the Sergeant's red lanyard, only worn by this regiment - 7th Armoured Division, pose with a German swastika flag captured near Roucamp. Also visible is a C Squadron sign enclosing the number 12 on the turret side. From 29 July, 1st RTR relinquished its place as senior regiment of 22nd Armoured Brigade to 5th Dragoon Guards, and hence this sign is probably in yellow. 8 August 1944. (IWM B8842)



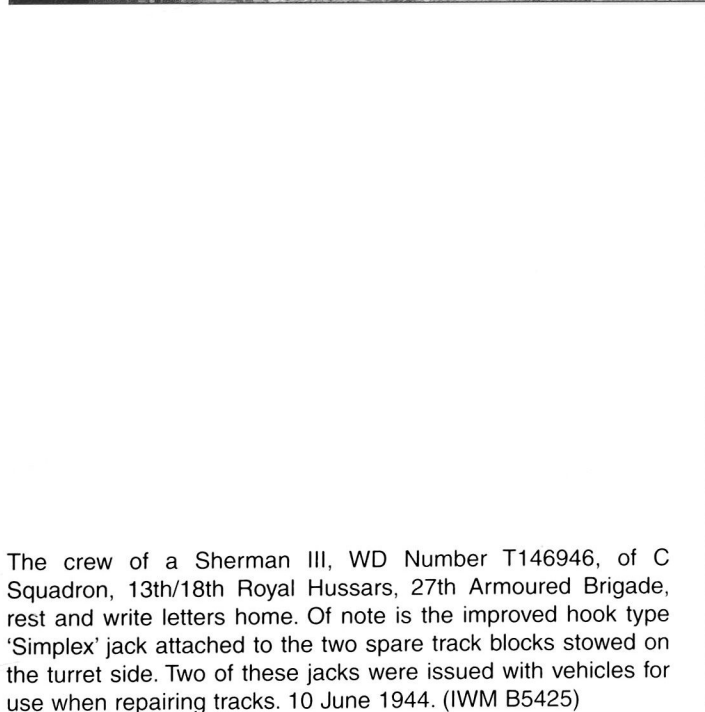
A REME Sergeant at work on a Cromwell tank of 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, at 29th Armoured Brigade workshops, 11th Armoured Division. This vehicle is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 8 August 1944. (IWM B9098)



Priest Kangaroo infantry carriers move up to the front. The simplicity of the conversion is obvious here with metal plates being welded over the gun aperture and as extra protection on the hull sides. The significance of the sign in the foreground is not known but may indicate 274th Field Company, RE of 51st (Highland) Division. The AoS sign on the rear of the Jeep identifies a RASC unit attached to 21st Army Group. As can be seen here, all British vehicles were supposed to obey Continental road rules by driving on the right hand side of the road. 9 August 1944. (IWM B8908)



The crew of an M10 Wolverine tank destroyer check the bearings of the idler axle. The cap badges of the two crewmen identify this regiment as 65th (Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, RA of 7th Armoured Division. Of note are the non-standard hooks on the turret and hull sides and also the small fillets on the suspension's return roller arms. 12 August 1944. (IWM B9045)



The crew of a Sherman III, WD Number T146946, of C Squadron, 13th/18th Royal Hussars, 27th Armoured Brigade, rest and write letters home. Of note is the improved hook type 'Simplex' jack attached to the two spare track blocks stowed on the turret side. Two of these jacks were issued with vehicles for use when repairing tracks. 10 June 1944. (IWM B5425)





Cromwell tanks at 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Division workshops near Villers-Bocage. The blanket box of the nearest tank is of a very early style often seen in North Africa, sometimes in Italy, but very rarely in France. The top of the blanket box appears to have been painted white. Note also the German MG 42 on the turret roof. 13 August 1944. (IWM B9095)



A kitten poses on the turret of a Sherman tank. Of particular note is the horizontal plate attached to the turret, visible half way along beneath the MG barrel, believed to be a sun-compass mount - this modification only seen on British/Commonwealth vehicles. Also of note are the unusual gunner's periscope guard and the early .50 cal ammunition box, whilst the number of wireless aerials would seem to indicate that this may be a command tank. 14 August 1944. (IWM B9157)



Major General G.P.B. "Pip" Roberts, GOC 11th Armoured Division, in his White Scout Car. Note the early style of white star recognition marking. Partially obscured here, the vehicle's WD Number is Z4955321. 15 August 1944. (IWM B9183)



The commander of a Churchill tank of 6th Guards Tank Brigade. Note the extra armour added to the rear of his cupola for increased protection against snipers. Compare this to the armour added as a field modification in B8578. 14 August 1944. (IWM B9154)



A Cromwell tank of 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry leads a column of vehicles through Flers. The AoS sign of an armoured recce regiment can be seen on the left of the hull front, and the 11th Armoured Division formation badge on the right. The vehicle's WD Number, T187827, is repeated on the turret side. The official date of this photograph - 17 August 1944 - must be questioned, as the Northants Yeomanry was replaced from 8 August by 15th/19th King's Royal Hussars. (IWM B9329)



A Cromwell of 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, the armoured recce regiment of 11th Armoured Division, passing through Vassy. The AoS sign of a white 45 on a green over blue square can be seen just to the left of the driver's position. 5 August 1944. (IWM B9231)



Taken from the same sequence as B9329, a 17pdr armed Challenger tank leads Cromwells of 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry through Flers. The low contrast between the red and green of the AoS sign when seen in black and white is most obvious here. Note also the A Squadron sign in white indicating an un-brigaded regiment. In this photograph the cap badges of the crew are visible and confirm the identification of 2nd Northants Yeomanry again putting the official date, 17 August 1944, in doubt. (IWM B9331)



A camouflaged White M3 Scout Car of a rarely photographed unit, GHQ Liaison Regiment. More popularly known as 'Phantom Signals', it was not in fact a signals unit but was classed as a RAC recce regiment. The unit's personnel were drawn from all branches of the British Army, retaining the cap badges of their former corps. All wireless operators however were seconded from the Royal Corps of Signals. Individual squadrons of the regiment were deployed to the most forward positions with the intention of intercepting German tactical communications, transmitting any information directly to Army Group HQ. The remains of a two-colour disruptive camouflage pattern can be seen just below the driver's door. 19 August 1944. (IWM B9417)



Infantry of 3rd Battalion, the Monmouthshire Regiment aboard Sherman tanks of the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, the junior regiment of 29th Armoured Brigade, 11th Armoured Division, waiting for the order to advance near Argentan. The second tank in line is a Sherman V, and the vehicle behind this is a Firefly. 21 August 1944. (IWM B9528)



A Sexton II 25pdr self-propelled gun of 86th (East Anglian, Hertfordshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA - the cap badges and 2nd Army insignia worn by the crew are visible in the original photograph - drives through the shattered village of Putanges-Pont-Écrepin. From April 1943 this regiment was granted the privilege of wearing the RAC black beret with the Hertfordshire Yeomanry cap badge. Note the open gunner's visor on the vehicle. 20 August 1944. (IWM B9460)



An early Stuart III light tank, WD Number T158714, follows two others through the streets of Gacé. On the turret side of the nearest tank is a number 4 in a dark colour outlined in white, similar in style to those seen on tanks of 13th/18th Hussars of 27th Armoured Brigade. The brigade in fact had 33 Stuart IIIs on hand for the invasion, but by the time this photograph was taken had been disbanded, the Hussars replacing 24th Lancers in 8th Armoured Brigade. 23 August 1944. (IWM B9634)



Taken from the same sequence as B9634, this photograph shows a Humber Scout Car crew being greeted by locals in the town of Gacé. At the very front of the hull the AoS sign of 4th/7th Royal Dragoons, a white 994 on a red square incorporating the white bar indicating army troops, can be seen. On the side of the mudguard nearest the camera the name JOYCE has been painted after the WD Number. Also of note is the hand painted star. 23 August 1944. (IWM B9635)



A Churchill VII Crocodile of 141st Regiment, RAC, demonstrates the tank's flame-throwing capabilities. This regiment was raised from the 7th Battalion, The Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs) and formed part of 31st Tank Brigade. 25 August 1944. (IWM B9674)



Taken from the same sequence as B9674 and showing the same tank. The only visible marking is the WD Number T252034/H, on the hull front and on the side below and in front of the air intake. 25 August 1944. (IWM B9682)



A Sexton II 25pdr self-propelled gun of 11th Armoured Division, probably 151st (Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, crosses the Seine on a Bailey Bridge. The name HYPERIDES is painted in white above the division's formation badge. Note the "comb" device on the transmission housing. 30 August 1944. (IWM B9807)

The official caption identifies this tank, WD Number T147573, as a Sherman of 11th Armoured Division near Les Thilliers-en-Vexin. However its markings are very similar to those used by 79th Armoured Division and the brackets seen on the hull side used to mount the CIRD (Canadian Indestructible Roller Device) would seem to confirm this. Note that the dark patches which at first glance appear to be stains, may in fact be a camouflage scheme - the tank in the far background displays an almost identical pattern. 31 August 1944. (IWM B9821)



Locals wave as a Sherman III enters Gisors during the advance across France. Note the wireless aerial on the hull front and the absence of a blanket box. No markings are visible except the white aerial recognition star on the turret roof. 31 August 1944. (IWM B9809)



The crew of a Humber Scout Car of 9th RTR - the unit serial number 992 can be seen under the exhaust louvres - watch for the enemy in Corneilles as a Churchill tank burns in the town square. 26 August 1944. (IWM BU166)



A Humber Armoured Car of 61st Reconnaissance Regiment, 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division passes a Cromwell. The tank in this photograph has previously been identified as belonging to 2nd Welsh Guards, the armoured recce regiment of the Guards Armoured Division. However the AoS sign of a white 40 on a black square just visible on the lower front hull, indicates the HQ of one of the armoured divisions. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU290)

A Cromwell of 2nd Welsh Guards leads vehicles of a RASC unit attached to 21st Army Group along a road just outside of Auneuil, a town near Beauvais. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU294)



A Sherman VC Firefly, of 2nd Irish Guards, leads a column of Sherman V tanks near Beauvais. Of note is the non-standard barrel support at the hull front - this seems to have been a common feature on the Guards Fireflies. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU298)



A Sherman V of 1st Coldstream Guards, enters Beauvais along a street crowded with locals. In the centre of the stowage box fitted to the hull rear can be seen an A Squadron sign in yellow, almost completely obscured by dust. The placement of the squadron sign seems to have been a common feature on tanks of this regiment, although the box was often moved to the hull front. To the right of the stowage box is the AoS sign for the second senior regiment of an armoured brigade - a white 52 on a red square - painted onto the infantry telephone box. An ammunition case has been welded to the left side and carries the the Guards Division formation badge. Also of note is the allied recognition star on the turret roof. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU309)



Sherman V tanks of 5th Guards Armoured Brigade - possibly of 2nd Irish Guards - wait in the streets of Antwerp while a Jeep of the US Army's 120th Infantry Regiment passes. On the nearest tank an A Squadron sign can be seen on the hull side to the left of the appliqué. In the original photograph the Guards formation badge is just visible on both tanks. The outline of a small shield enclosing three solid circles in the same colour has been painted onto the lower half of the blanket box of the nearest tank. The blanket box of the next vehicle in line bears a hand painted number 19, possibly in yellow, and the name DOG - which looks as though it may have been changed from BOG - in what may be white. Note also the green and white striped aerial. 3 September 1944. (IWM BU392)



A Sherman V of 2nd Irish Guards followed by an M5 Halftrack cross into Belgium at the village of Antwerp. The name ERIN is painted just in front of the driver, and unusually this tank displays two identical AoS signs on the transmission housing below the hull machine gun. Just visible in the original photograph is the green and white striping on the wireless aerials. Also visible is a small C Squadron sign just above the left mudguard. 3 September 1944. (IWM BU372)



A Cromwell tank crew of 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Division share their midday meal with a French boy in the village of Vignacourt. The tank's name, DOREEN, has been painted onto the front of the turret. The Royal Tank Regiment badge is clearly visible on the men's RAC berets. As a published list of 1st RTR names makes no mention of DOREEN, then this vehicle may possibly but by no means definitely, be from 5th RTR. 2 September 1944. (IWM BU430)



Lieutenant Colonel H.A. Smith, OC of 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment, is driven through Brussels in a Staghound Armoured Car. Note the AoS sign of a corps armoured car regiment on the left mudguard - the white number 44 seems to have been outlined in a dark colour. Below the vehicle's WD Number, F223516, can be seen the name HERCULES in what may be yellow. Lt. Col. Smith commanded the 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment from July 1942 until the end of the war, and was appointed the Acting Colonel of the Corps of Household Cavalry in 1946. 4 September 1944. (IWM BU482A)

A Cromwell IV, WD Number T188169, of 2nd Welsh Guards ferries wounded German prisoners to an aid post. The C Squadron sign in the white of an unbrigaded regiment can be seen on the hull stowage box. 3 September 1944. (IWM BU549)



Two Humber Armoured Cars lead carriers and M5 Halftracks of 15th Reconnaissance Regiment, 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division towards Lille. The AoS sign denoting a recce regiment attached to an infantry division - a white number 41 on a green over blue square - can be seen on the hull front adjacent to the division's formation badge. 5 September 1944. (IWM BU823)



Major General G.L. Verney, GOC 7th Armoured Division, enters Ghent in a Staghound Armoured Car of Division HQ. Verney, a Guardsman, was personally appointed by Montgomery to take over command of the division from "Bobby" Erskine on 4 August 1944. The vehicle's WD Number, F225524, is displayed prominently on the hull front and the division's famous formation badge can be seen on the left mudguard combined with the AoS sign of a white 40 on a black square, denoting the HQ of an armoured division. 8 September 1944. (IWM BU769)

Churchill VII tank crews of 34th Tank Brigade watch as RAF bombers attack Le Havre. The lanyard on the left shoulder of the figure third from right would suggest that this is 9th RTR, which joined the brigade on 4 September 1944. Following a tradition dating back to the 1914-18 War, personnel of 9th RTR were granted the privilege of wearing a lanyard in the red and green colours of the Croix de Guerre on their left shoulder. Unusually the same man also wears the 'Diabolo' insignia of 31st Tank Brigade, the formation to which 9th RTR had been attached until August. 10 September 1944. (IWM BU855)





French policemen with captured German weapons, gather around a Humber Scout Car mounting twin Bren AA guns, named STORK of 141st RAC, 31st Tank Brigade during mopping-up operations in Le Havre. What at first glance appears to be some kind of squadron sign under the vehicle's name is in fact an incomplete 79th Armoured Division formation badge - the previously independent brigade joining the division from September 1944. The AoS signs used by 31st Tank Brigade retained the diagonal white stripe which would normally indicate troops attached to Army HQ. 12 September 1944. (IWM BU916)



Corporal Sid Walker of the 3rd/4th County of London Yeomanry of 4th Armoured Brigade, with a knocked-out German Jagdpanther tank destroyer in the Belgian town of Gheel, near Antwerp. 16 September 1944. (IWM B10026)



A Lloyd Carrier, WD Number T242286, and crew at the ready. The official caption identifies this unit as 15th (Scottish) Division. However the formation badge seen on the stowage box whilst similar, is in fact that of the Princess Irene Brigade - sometimes referred to as the Royal Netherlands Brigade. The AoS sign on the mudguard is made up of a white 138 unit serial number, on a green over blue square. Also of note is the two colour disruptive camouflage pattern and the name Limburg written in chalk on the vehicle's side. 18 September 1944. (IWM B10050)



A Cromwell belonging to 2nd Welsh Guards of Guards Armoured Division, parked next to a Sherman V OP tank in Valkenswaard, south of Eindhoven. 18 September 1944. (IWM BU931)



Taken from the same sequence as B10131, a Daimler Dingo Scout Car of the 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment enters Grave. There has been some speculation that as this regiment came under the orders of the Guards Armoured Division for much of the campaign, the markings of this division were adopted. However, the formation badge of VIII Corps, and the AoS sign of a corps armoured car regiment are clearly visible here. The Jeep in the background carries the AoS sign of the senior field artillery regiment of an infantry division, a white 42 on a red over blue square. 20 September 1944. (IWM B10133)



Cromwell tanks of C Squadron, 2nd Welsh Guards drive along "Hell's Highway" towards Nijmegen during Operation Market-Garden. The large squadron sign, in the white of an un-brigaded regiment, is clearly visible on the hull rear and has been repeated on the stowage box on the side of the vehicle. The markings of this regiment are discussed further in the illustration section. 20 September 1944. (IWM B10131)



A SOD (Sawn Off Daimler) of The Inns of Court Regiment, leads Daimler Armoured Cars and other recce vehicles down a road near Lille-St. Hubert. A field modification peculiar to this regiment, the SOD was a Daimler Armoured Car with the turret and front mudguards removed. 20 September 1944. (IWM B10147)



AEC Mk III and Staghound Armoured Cars of the 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment move forward on the road to Lille-St. Hubert, a crossing on the Meuse-Escaut Canal. The AoS sign of a corps armoured car regiment - a white 44 on a green over blue square incorporating a 2 inch white bar at the top - and the VIII Corps formation badge can be seen on the Staghounds. 20 September 1944. (IWM B10147A)

Cromwell tanks of 2nd Welsh Guards crossing the bridge at Nijmegen. An A Squadron sign enclosing a number 4 is barely visible on the left rear hull of the nearest tank. 21 September 1944. (IWM B10172)



A Daimler Armoured Car fitted with a "Littlejohn Adaptor", and crews of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 11th Hussars. The XXX Corps formation badge, here rendered as a black charging boar on a white square, can be seen on the right side mudguard. Above this and almost completely obscured by the crewman's right foot, is what appears to be an AoS sign - which in this case would be a white 44 on a green over blue square. 22 September 1944. (IWM B10235)

A Sexton II 25pdr self-propelled gun, named HANNIBAL III, and Universal Carrier of 151st (Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA of 11th Armoured Division wait by the roadside as some of the division's support vehicles pass during the advance in Holland. The AoS sign on the left mudguard of the lorry identifies a unit of the Royal Corps of Signals attached to 11th Armoured Division's 179th Light Field Ambulance - a red number 90 on a white over light blue square. Note the H6 marking under the gun barrel. 22 September 1944. (IWM B10244)



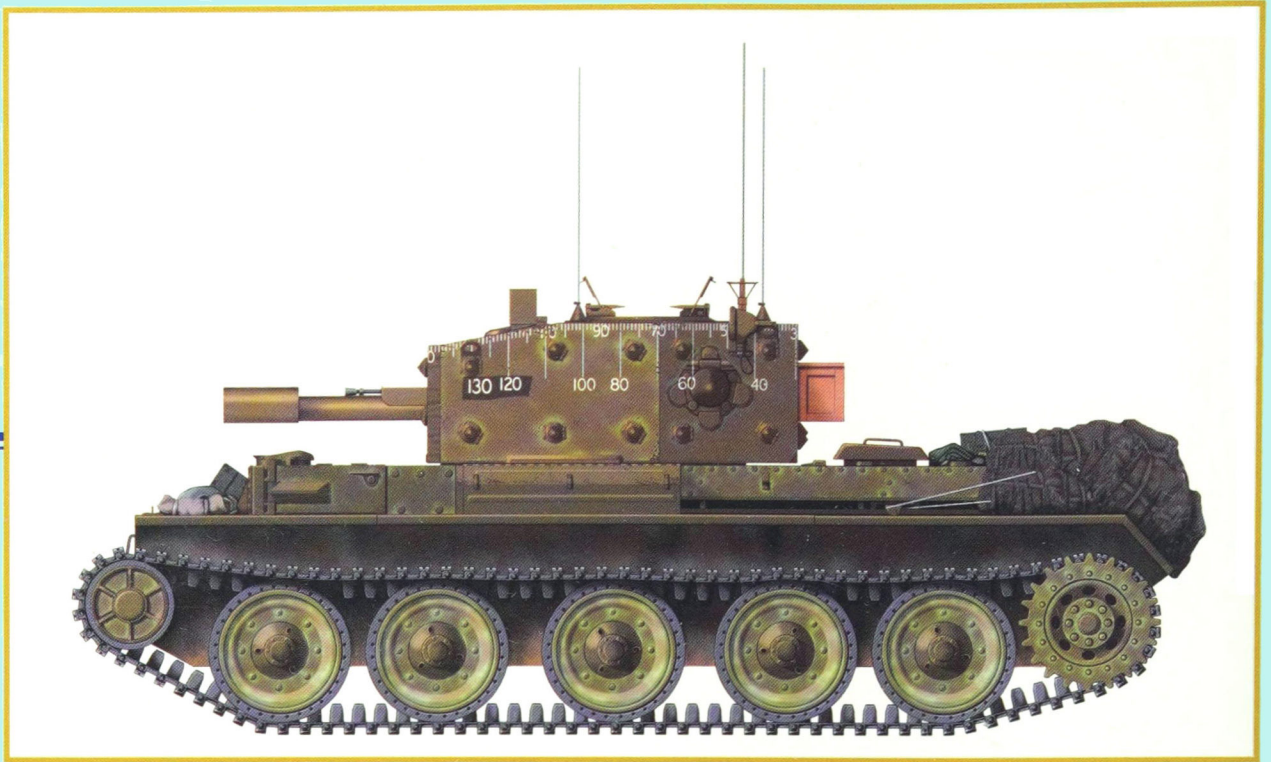


Sexton II 25pdr self-propelled guns - the vehicle in the foreground displaying the WD Number S233749 - of 151st (Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA, of 11th Armoured Division pass through Deurne, during the advance towards Gemert. The vehicles and markings of this regiment are often incorrectly identified as 13th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, the division's senior field artillery regiment. However this photograph and others in this book not only offer a clear view of the AoS sign of the junior field regiment, but also of the distinctive Yeomanry cap badge. 26 September 1944. (IWM B10363)

An Achilles 17pdr of A Troop, 117 Battery, 75th Anti-Tank Regiment, 11th Armoured Division in Holland. This vehicle appears to carry no insignia other than the original US shipping markings. The division's formation badge can however be seen on the uniforms of the crew. Note that both sets of tracks are fitted "backwards". 4 October 1944. (IWM B10489)



Taken from the same sequence as B10489, an officer of 117 Battery, 75th Anti-Tank Regiment atop one of the regiment's Achilles tank destroyers. This picture is almost certainly posed as the drop leads to which the headset is connected are attached to the intercom box above the driver's position. The original US serial number and a full set of shipping details are the only visible markings. 4 October 1944. (IWM B10490)



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